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# ENGLISH CONTEMPORARY ART

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# CONTEMPORARY ART

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
OF ROBERT DE LA SIZERANNE
BY H. M. POYNTER.

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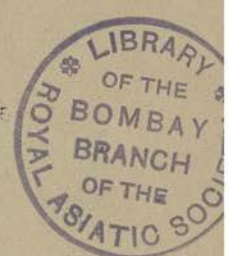


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# INTRODUCTION

THERE is an English school of painting. This is what first strikes a visitor to any International Exhibition of the Fine Arts, in whatever country it may be held. Passing through the galleries set apart for Germany, Austria, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Holland, even for the United States or for Scandinavia, you might imagine yourself to be still in France, and you are, as a fact, always amongst artists who live in Paris, or who have studied in Paris, or who follow, at least from afar off, either the discipline of her school, or the revolutionary movement of Parisian Art circles. A great many labels are required to convince you that the Atlantic rolls between Mr. Sargent and the studio of M. Carolus-Duran, or, that the Baltic has been crossed to reach M. Werenskiöld and that M. Roll did not cross it. But on reaching the English pictures you feel, on the contrary, that you are no longer amongst fellow-countrymen and it is doubtful even whether they may be your contemporaries. It is like slipping a magic ring on to your finger which transports you to a

distant and unknown shore. I do not mean to say that talent, and even individual talent, is only to be found in London, for it is almost universal. But neither Germany, with MM. Lenbach, Böcklin, de Uhde and de Werner; nor Hungary, with MM. Brozik and de Payer; nor Scandinavia, with MM. Krojer, or Heyerdahl, or Munsterhjolm; nor Holland with MM. Neuhuys, or Martens; nor Spain, with MM. Pradilla, or Sanchez Perrier; nor Belgium, with MM. Wauters and Jean Verhas; nor Roumania, with MM. Mirea and Grigoresco, nor any other country that may be named, offers a single group that does not proceed more or less directly from our National Schools. These artists may be clever, some of them as clever as our own, but they do not differ from them. It is true that they occupy different regions of the globe, but on an æsthetic map these would be coloured like France, as if they were colonies of French Art. The British Isles, on the contrary, stand out vividly from the rest of the map. Their painters seem to ignore the Continent. If they have heard of it they have borrowed nothing from it, and if they have seen it they have not observed it. They have thrown no bridge across the Channel. * Fifty years ago, when

* This merely relates, it must be understood, to the great English painters, the masters whose names have become most famous in England, and who, abroad, best characterise the art of their

we were adopting a broader manner wherein drawing played a smaller part and details were sacrificed to the whole, our neighbours were reversing the process, and entering on the minutiæ of the Primitives. At the present time, when the open-air school has lighted up most of our canvases, they remain boldly faithful to their startling colouring, to their laboured and complicated modelling. The assaults of realism and of impressionism are broken on their æstheticism, like the squadrons of Ney on the squares of Wellington. There are German, Hungarian, Belgian, Spanish, Scandinavian painters, but there is an English School of painting.

This is certainly no new discovery. In 1859 Th: Silvestre commended this art wherein he discovered "the taste of the soil, the smell of the country." Th. Gautier remarked in it "a strong local savour which owes nothing to other schools," and, thenceforward, every year has accentuated and deepened these distinctive features. Nevertheless English painting remains unknown to us. At the

country. In the annual exhibitions of the Royal Academy, or the New Gallery, or in Bond Street, a mass of mediocre pictures is to be found, more or less like our own. But such as these are not taken into account in this study, any more than a French writer on contemporary art in France would take account of two or three thousand exhibitors of no value, renown, or originality, after having described the work of Bonnat, Carolus-Duran, Dagnan-Bouveret, and Puvis de Chavannes.

Louvre it is only represented in an ante-room, where no contemporary work has found a place. If Mr. Burne-Jones has sent some works, by no means of his best, to our Salons, his brethren have not followed his example, and the day is doubtless far off when they will come in a body to subject themselves to a verdict from the "Latin" point of view. Only at the Universal Exhibitions of 1855 to 1889 could something be conceived of the art of the pre-Raphaelites, or of the Academicians across the Channel. And this something is very far from giving a characteristic, still less a complete idea of the English school of painting. In 1889, for instance, Mr. Watts had not sent his most typical works; neither Madox Brown nor Holman Hunt were exhibitors, and from the section of painting the curious ornamental experiments of Mr. William Morris were entirely absent. * So that we have a

* In 1889 Mr. Alma-Tadema exhibited the "Women of Amphissa" (where the Mænads, wearied with their wanderings by torchlight, had laid themselves down to rest in the market-place, and the matrons stood in silence around them watching their slumbers) and "Expectation"; Mr. Burne-Jones exhibited "King Cophetua," and later on he sent to the Champ de Mars, amongst other canvases, "The Depths of the Sea"—a woman's figure, sea-weed or siren, entwining and dragging down a man to the bottom of the water. Mr. Herkomer exhibited two portraits in 1889, "The Lady in Black" and "The Lady in White" (Miss Catherine Grant). Mr. Leighton, three pictures, one of which was "Captive Andromache." Mr. Millais, portraits of Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Hook, the painter; "Cherry Ripe," "Soap Bubbles," the "Last Rose of Summer," and "Cinderella." Mr. Orchardson, "Alone" (a gentleman in a black coat,

clearer notion of the School of Phidias or of the art of the Pharaohs than of the English School, which is two hours' distance from France and which is alive.

It is time that we should learn to know this neighbouring art, neglected by us—for, if the English artists seldom come to us, our artists are beginning to go to them, and the charm of the unknown operates more surely than any public exhibition would do. The distance, the sea crossing, which is not free from terrors for many Frenchmen, the difficulty of seeing the works of contemporary masters, which are seldom to be found in any London gallery, but belong chiefly to provincial and private collections, the doors that have to be forced open, the efforts to be made, all this surrounds the works of our neighbours with a halo they would not possess were they to be seen by every one beside our masterpieces in the Louvre.

In æstheticism, as in love, it is difficulties that make lovers, obstacles that attract them. For a long time, at meetings of the symbolists, the names of Watts and Burne-Jones have been heard with reverence, and many adopt and repeat them as magic words, the virtue of which requires no explanation. But some artists have studied their works, they are

buried in his arm-chair, in front of the fire), the "First Dance," and "Master Baby." Mr. Watts exhibited "Diana and Endymion," the "Judgment of Paris," "Love and Life," "Mammon," "Hope," and portraits.

impregnated with them, and any young painter who leaves Calais for Dover, may repeat the saying of Gustave Doré:

"Something tells me that if I go to England I shall break many ties with my country." Already it is evident, either in isolated work like that of M. Tissot, or in the small exhibitions of groups of symbolists, that these innovators have not disdained to draw some of their inspiration from the English masters. * The great artist whom the symbolists claim, although without sufficient warrant, M. Puvis de Chavannes, has certain analogies with the pre-Raphaelites in his manner of composition. Hardly a Frenchman going to London but has made this remark himself, and hardly an English amateur but has it on his conscience that he has called the master of the "Enfance de Sainte Geneviève" the French Burne-Jones. On the other hand, a reminiscence of Turner, and even of Watts, is easily to be traced in the method of our *pointillistes*. So whether you

* In "The Life of our Lord," by M. Tissot, compare the impression made by the face of Christ looking through the trellis of the Gospels, and the face of Christ seen through a window in Rossetti's "Mary Magdalen." Compare the imperceptible bluish halo which emanates from the garments of Christ in the "Voix Intérieures" with the treatment of the halo in Hunt's "Triumph of the Innocents"; and the angels holding the globes, in which are visible the various scenes of the Passion, with Burne-Jones' "Angels of the Creation," and with those of the "Past, Present, and Future" of MacGregor.

consider the one or the other of the newest tendencies which attract young men from the scholastic path, literary or symbolic art on the one side, or the art of pure method on the other, it is apparent that they are connected with, or at least that they strangely resemble, contemporary English art. Therefore it is profitable for us to tell of this art; of its birth, of its chief masters and of their great works, of the nature of its supreme originality; and to draw from such a study some conclusions as to what is to be hoped and to be feared from it in the future.

This is the aim and the plan of this book. As it is a synthesis, rather than a history, of English contemporary art there will not be included in it on the same footing as the seven living masters,* Watts, Hunt, Leighton, Alma-Tadema, Millais, Herkomer and Burne-Jones, those painters of great talent but with less influence who preceded without exactly forming them; such men as Walker and Mason. Landscape painters also will be excluded because there is not, or rather because there is no longer, to be exact, an English school of landscape. There is only contemporary landscape painting.

* Written in 1895.

# PART I.

## The Germs of the Pre-Raphaelite Movement.

# ENGLISH CONTEMPORARY ART

## CHAPTER I

### ENGLISH ART IN 1844

FIFTY years ago a young artist, then unknown to fame, who has since died without attaining to glory, was returning to England, after studying at Antwerp, Rome, and Paris. He brought with him drawings, designs for frescoes and historical pictures, done in Paris, but quite opposed to all French ideas. Shortly before this he had sent to an exhibition a large composition of William the Conqueror. This young man, who cherished the grandest dreams of ambition, was destined never to see the light of full success shine upon him; and yet he was marching to victory like the hero of his picture, and was bringing English contemporary art over with him to his own country.

To walk once through a general Exhibition is enough indeed to impress us with the fact that there is a great national art in England; and one visit to a London gallery clearly shows that this art is of recent date. Go to the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square, that Square in which the English military spirit has placed the figures of its two greatest heroes, Nelson

and Gordon; or to the South Kensington Museum, those vast halls where all the plastic arts, all styles, all schools are arranged for study in a didactic manner and with a luxury which is eminently English, and yet you can often imagine yourself at the Louvre. Up to 1848 you admire, but without emotion. Reynolds and Gainsborough are great masters, their work is eighteenth century painting, but not English painting. It is their models, their ladies and young ladies, which give the English feeling to their figures, it does not come from their brush. Their æsthetics were those of all Europe of that day. Later on, Lawrence painted our neighbours as Gérard painted us. Other pictures are to be seen in these halls, but no other manner of painting, nor of drawing, nor of composing and creating a subject. The landscape painters alone, with Turner and Constable at their head, strike a new and powerful note from the beginning of the century; but the one stands alone, as little to be imitated in his own country as elsewhere, belonging no more to one region of the globe than a comet belongs to one region of the sky; the other was so speedily followed and outstripped by the French, that it is his glory rather to have initiated a new movement in Europe than his good fortune to have founded a national art in his native land.

As for the rest—Haydon, Wilkie, Landseer, Ward,

Eastlake, Etty, Mulready, Maclise, Egg, Webster, Leslie—they paint, more or less cleverly, like everyone else. Their dogs, their horses, their village politicians, their scenes of still life, of interiors and of kitchens, are better done by the Dutch, and you pass them by with but momentary interest. There is nothing to foretell that out of all this is to spring something new and great. Now and again a weird flash lights up this steady-going and prosaic existence. A small picture of Blake's shows the Prime Minister, Pitt, in the form of an angel clad in green and gold, guiding through the clouds the English Parliament depicted as the monster described in the book of Job.* Then all slumbers anew; petty men, petty subjects, petty painting. Smooth, glazed colour, plastered upon bitumen, false and feeble, finickin without finish, too black in the shadows, too brilliant in the lights; a weak outline, undecided, and vaguely generalising. As the portentous date of 1850 draws near, the saying of Constable in 1821 recurs to mind: "In thirty years English art will have ceased to exist."

Yet, to those who can see clearly, two characteristics are there asleep, which will awaken at the call of a prince of art to charm contemporary imaginations.

The first is intellectuality of subject. The English

* At the National Gallery, "The spiritual form of Pitt guiding Behemoth."

have always taken pains to choose interesting scenes, somewhat complicated ones indeed, which shall strike the mind as well as the eye, arousing curiosity, exciting the memory and provoking tears and laughter by an unspoken tale. In the Sheepshanks collection at the South Kensington Museum this British taste is very apparent. Side by side, touching each other, hang a scene from the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, one from the *Malade Imaginaire*, one from the *Femmes Savantes*, three from "Don Quixote," one from "The Merry Wives of Windsor," one of my Uncle Toby, one from the "Taming of the Shrew," from the "Good-natured Man," the "Refusal," one taken from Duncan Grey, Portia and Bassano, in short from the dramas and romances of all lands. These canvases are signed by Wilkie, Redgrave, Frith and Leslie. This is the art of the first half of this century. The idea, well defined by Hogarth, had been developed, that the brush should write, narrate, instruct, not merely depict. But before 1850, the events narrated were trivial; expressing petty fancies, ridiculous or narrow sentiments; teaching the articles of the code of politeness; playing the part of those picture books which are given to children, to show them the results of idleness, lying and greediness.

The second quality is intensity of expression.

Any one who has seen Landseer's dogs, or even

one of those studies of animals in the English illustrated papers in which the *habitus corporis* is so closely studied, the expression so well caught, the turn of the head so intelligent, and varied as the animal is awaiting, fearing, longing for, questioning his master or thinking to himself, anyone, we say, can easily understand what is meant by this phrase, intensity of expression. It is not merely exactness that is implied, for that would not be a characteristic of English art. Our animal painters of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries catch the exact expression, and yet what a difference between the dogs of Oudry or Desportes at the Louvre, and those of Landseer at the National Gallery.

And, as, before 1850, this intellectuality only appears in worthless subjects, so, this intensity of expression is only resolutely sought for and happily attained in the representations of animals. Most of the human forms are in commonplace attitudes, children of the lay figure, without expressive modelling, specific truth, or picturesque precision; thrown upon backgrounds composed in the studio, served up with smart academic sauce after general principles, which, though excellent in themselves, are ill-understood and carelessly applied, and vanish into more and more indistinct reminiscences of the brave days of Reynolds and Gainsborough.

Such was art in England when Ford Madox Brown returned from Antwerp and Paris, with an æsthetic revolution in his portfolios. I do not mean to say that all the tendencies which have prevailed, all the individualities which have been developed since that day, sprang from this artist, nor that none of his countrymen were feeling and dreaming as he did when he returned to England. But consider that in 1844, when his "William the Conqueror" was exhibited, nothing novel had yet appeared; that Rossetti was 16, Hunt 17, Millais 15, Watts 26, Leighton 14, Burne Jones 11, and that none of these masters, therefore, had yet formed his style; consider moreover, that the style of composition, of painting and of drawing inaugurated by Madox Brown is to be found at this day, fifty years after his first work, in the pictures of Burne Jones, having passed through those of Burne Jones' master—Rossetti, and to the exhibitor of 1844, must be granted the important position of the sower, in fields where others have only tilled too soon, or reaped when the harvest was ripe.*

What was there then in the hand of this sower?

* The position restored to Madox Brown, here and farther on, in the pre-Raphaelite movement, has been contested, since these lines appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, by Mr. Holman Hunt, the eminent artist. If the reasons that he has been kind enough to give me for his opinion have not modified mine, nor led to the alteration of a word of my text, they yet deserve examination, which will be given them.

In his head there was this very clear idea, that art was perishing from the systematic generalisation of form, and could only be saved by the converse; that is to say, by a minute study of individual features. In his heart was a vague, but ardent, longing to see art in England taking a great social place, the place of daily bread, instead of being a mere sweetmeat reserved for the rich man's table. In his hand was a certain refined awkwardness, a stiff delicacy, a minuteness of research, adopted in part from the Gothic school of Baron Wappers at Antwerp, and in part from direct contemplation of the Primitives. All this was revolutionary, and on that account naturally displeased the conservative temper of the English. But all this was anti-French, anti-continental, absolutely original and autonomous, and on that account could not but please their patriotic feelings.

"In Paris I first formed my idea of making pictures realistic, because no Frenchman did so," said Madox Brown.

We do not insist on the word realistic, which does not mean to an Englishman at all what it means to us. We only mark this rallying cry against the French school in favour of a national art.*

* H. Quilter.—F. Madox Brown. Preferences in Art. 1892.—F. Madox Brown. Of the mechanism of an historical picture, in the second number of the "Germ." 1850.

When Madox Brown reached London the great competition for the decoration of the new Houses of Parliament was still under discussion. It had been opened in 1843 and had produced no less than 140 designs signed by the best artists of the day. This æsthetic tournament is a date in the history of the arts in England, because it brought to the front artists who had been hitherto unknown. A young, self-taught painter, Watts, had just revealed himself. Madox Brown had sent in five large compositions. The principal one was an episode of the Norman Conquest, "The body of Harold brought before William the Conqueror." These were his first attempts in a fresh path, and his protest against the old methods of official work. But no echo was heard in reply. The check was so evident, the public contempt so plain, that when the young artist one day received a letter signed with an Italian name—Dante Gabriel Rossetti, in which the writer, with many eulogies, begged to become his pupil, he did not doubt that this unknown correspondent was fooling him. A few days later he appeared at Rossetti's house.

"I was told," says the poet, "that a gentleman wanted to see me, who would not come in nor give his name; he was standing in the passage; and when I ran downstairs there stood Brown, a great

"THE LAST OF ENGLAND." FORD MADOX BROWN.

stick in one hand and my note in the other. His salutation was: 'Is your name Rossetti, and is this your writing?' I said it was, but I began to shake in my shoes. 'What do you mean by it?' was his next question. And when I replied that I meant what I had written, wanting to be a painter, and knowing nothing of how to go about it, the fact dawned upon the Brownonian intellect that the letter was not a hoax, but an honest compliment; he suddenly changed from a deadly antagonist to the sweetest of friends." *

This youth, who hastened to range himself so unexpectedly under Madox Brown's banner, was only twenty. He was the son of an Italian exile, born in the little old city of Vasto d'Ammone perched in the Abruzzi. Owing to the fact that his father (a mountaineer longing for culture) had gone down to Naples and had become keeper of the museum there for many years, his family had imbibed wide ideas of art. Owing the fact that this keeper of antique divinities had become a destroyer of modern monarchies, and a poet known by his spirited songs, he was so far compromised in 1820 that the restoration of the Bourbons cast him on the shores of England. Owing to the fact, moreover, that he had married the sister of one of Byron's companions,

* W. Bell Scott, *Autobiographical Notes*, Vol. I. London, 1892.

Dr. Polidori, his children united in their family memories, passions, and griefs, an echo of all the great patriotic troubles which disturbed the youth of this century. All these facts were perhaps indispensable to the effect produced in March 1848, by the Gothic art of Madox Brown on an inhabitant of London, as being neither scandalous nor out of date. Whilst the English remained indifferent to the future of their national art, the young Italian enthusiastically acclaimed it, and, thanks to the subsidies of his grandfather Polidori, he began his apprenticeship as a painter.

Madox Brown, believing that it was of the first importance to bend this fiery nature to the strict discipline of reality, set the future author of "Dante's Dream" to copy tobacco-jars. Rossetti had already gone through the Academy course without learning much from it, and he resigned himself, more or less willingly, to follow the teaching he had sought. He worked impatiently, furiously, with no order or method; he cleaned his palette with bits of paper thrown on the floor, which stuck to the boots of visitors to the studio; he began a dozen pictures at once; then he collapsed into utter prostration, worn out, disgusted with himself and with everything; he would finish nothing, he would listen to nothing, he rolled on the ground, groaning horribly. Then he disappeared for

a month. Madox Brown was not offended, supposing that his pupil had heard voices from above calling him to other labours; these voices were those of the "*trecentists*" for which he listened in libraries, attempting to write sonnets and poems himself. He sent these attempts to famous poets like Leigh Hunt, and to less famous ones like William Bell Scott, asking them, with much praise of their verses, what they thought of his. He sent them thus, in manuscript, masterpieces of grace and art, the "Elect Lady" for example, and lesser poems under the title of "Songs of Catholic Art," which made rationalists or Protestants shudder. Then he would resume a discussion with his half-blind father on the "Divina Commedia," which the old man had annotated; or a discussion with his brother, William Michael, or his sister Christina, on the nimbus of the middle ages. The whole household wrote in verse.*

No one understood the temperament of this *dilettante*, bitten with everything; this improvisor, who

* See W. Bell Scott: *Autobiographical Notes*, Vol. I. On Rossetti: Joseph Knight: *Life of D. G. Rossetti.* London, 1887. William Sharp: *D. G. Rossetti: A Record and a Study.* London, 1882. Esther Wood: *D. G. Rossetti and the pre-Raphaelite movement.* London, 1894. W. Holman Hunt: *The pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Contemporary Review*, May, June, July, 1886; and in Chambers' *Encyclopædia.* F. G. Stephens, P.R.B.: *D. G. Rossetti. "Portfolio."* May, 1894. Harry Quilter: *Preferences in Art.* London, 1892. Myers: *Modern Essays.* London, 1883. Edouard Rod: *Rossetti and the English pre-Raphaelites,* in his volume on *Giacomo Leopardi.* Henri Jacottet: *D. G. Rossetti.* Bibliothèque Universelle, 1894.

spoke on everything; this anti-papal revolutionary, who was full of saints and angels; this painter, busied with rhymes and rhythm; and his renown spread astonishingly. Gaunt and brown, foreign in speech and in looks, with an arched forehead and brilliant eyes, his hair falling on his shoulders, his beard trimmed like a Neapolitan fisherman's, his dress neglected and covered with stains, to the youth studying the "round" at the Academy he seemed infinitely superior to the common run of port-wine drinkers. His passion for the picturesque, his scorn for the discoveries of science, his mysticism crossed with anxiety to sell his pictures for a good price, the perpetual activity of his mind, astonished his most intimate friends to the very end of his life. By turns he painted and wrote, repainted and rewrote; fell in love with his model, Miss Siddall, hesitated for ten years whether he should marry her, and did so at last; then, when this beloved wife was snatched from him by an unforeseen blow, he cast his manuscripts, his finest poems, into her coffin, and for seven years he refused to unearth them; then, changing his mind, he permitted the terrible and mournful ceremony of recovering the manuscripts buried with the corpse, and drew a magnificent income from them. Finally, on his death-bed, after a life spent in utter religious indifference amidst freethinkers and antagonists to

Romanism, he besought his astounded friends for a priest—a confessor.

Whilst Rossetti was copying tobacco-jars in Madox Brown's studio, one of his companions at the Royal Academy classes was making desperate, superhuman efforts to attain an independent position as an artist, and thus to escape from trade which was the occupation of his family. He was called William Holman Hunt, and was twenty years old. His father, a small City merchant, tried by every means to deter him from the career of an artist; but never was paternal prudence more obstinately crossed by fate. As the boy spent all his time in drawing instead of learning, he was taken, at twelve years old, from school, and placed as clerk with a kind of auctioneer and valuer, who caught his pupil one day hiding something in his desk and insisted on knowing what it was. He did not conceal his delight at the discovery that it was a drawing.

"Well done," he said one day; "when there's nothing much to be done, you and I will shut ourselves in here and have a day's painting together."

This lasted for a year and a half. After that the youth was placed in a warehouse managed by an agent of Richard Cobden. There he met with a clerk whose chief business it was to design patterns for calicoes and other materials for the firm. Young Hunt naturally helped him in this work, and dreamed

more than ever of becoming an artist. Between whiles he spent his savings in taking lessons from a portrait painter, a pupil of Reynolds. He made such a striking portrait of an old orangewoman, who came to the warehouse with her fruit, that the fame of it spread abroad, and reached the ears of old Hunt. The son seized the opportunity to declare that he would be a painter and nothing but a painter. The father having, to salve his conscience, exhausted all possible objections, surrendered to the perversity of events, and consoled himself with exultation, being prouder at heart than he would admit.

But the prize was far from won. For many a day Holman Hunt struggled against poverty, and undertook all sorts of incongruous work to elude it. He copied the pictures of great masters for other copyists; he touched up portraits which no longer pleased their owners, either because they were too like or not like enough, or because the dress was out of fashion. He failed twice in the entrance examination to the Royal Academy, and succeeded at last, after countless efforts, under pain of being sent back to business, or into the country to a farmer uncle.

Happily there were a few good times now and again in his career. At the Academy classes Hunt met a lad two years younger than himself, almost a child, John Everett Millais, who astonished his

teachers by his extraordinary aptitude. At fifteen he had carried off the medal for studies from the antique, and everything pointed to a brilliant future in store for him. The two youths often talked of their future, and also of that of art in England, which seemed to them sadly degenerate. They talked of the heavy, dull, blackened colour which they were taught to use, comparing it with the clear, vivid, striking tones of the old masters and also of nature, and discussed how they could substitute the latter for the former. Hunt had, been much struck by what a passer-by had said to him whilst he was copying Wilkie's "Blind Fiddler" at the National Gallery. "You will never get Wilkie's freshness if you paint upon preparations of brown, grey, or bitumen, if you rub your canvas over with neutral tints, some for shadows, some for lights, as you are taught to do at the Academy, for these will soon reappear beneath your colours and will turn them black. Wilkie himself painted on unprepared white canvas and finished his picture bit by bit like a fresco."*

* This detail, like most of those referring to Holman Hunt, is borrowed from his reminiscences, and has been confirmed to me by the painter himself. Therefore I accept it as a fact, that is to say, I believe the advice to have been given and followed, but an examination of Wilkie's pictures makes me greatly doubt their having been painted without a preparation of neutral tints. See Redgrave, *A Century of Painters of the English School: Wilkie*, on this subject.

This advice from a stranger came at the right moment, for it was not only excellent in itself, but it pointed out an heroic remedy for a crying evil. Hunt and Millais both pondered it, and, after investigating the few pictures by the early masters to be seen here and there in collections, they asked themselves if their perennial freshness did not result from the pure method, free from groundwork, from skilful mixtures, from "cooking up," which the predecessors of Raphael had transferred from fresco, in which it is indispensable, to oil painting, in which it had been discarded. They noticed especially, with a vague ambition to attain to it, the clear, brilliant colour of these primitive masters, in whom Madox Brown had chiefly observed the gestures, studied individually, not learned by heart; the attitudes taken from nature, not from the lay figure or from the famous figures of great masterpieces.

Besides these æsthetic discussions Holman Hunt's great delight was in reading. Poets, philosophers, historians, scientists, he devoured all that came in his way. Like Flandrin he educated his thoughts at the same time as his eyes, painting all day and reading almost all night.

One evening a fellow-student brought him a book published a few years previously and constantly re-edited: "Modern Painters," by a Graduate of Oxford.

Holman Hunt turned the pages, at first with curiosity, then with admiration, finally with enthusiasm. This was not one of those vague babblings which are usually catalogued under the heading of "Æsthetics" in that literature of art which is due to deserters from art to literature, who write badly and who cannot draw. It was an energetic, well-sustained, eloquent, passionate pleading in favour of natural landscape, as opposed to academic and artificial landscape painting. It was a brilliant discourse full of facts and examples, in which the experience of an expert underlay every theory; a dissertation, in which a stroke of the brush had evidently preceded every stroke of the pen. And the language was at once the finest, the richest, the strongest that could be devised. Never had art been written of in any country in such fashion, with such fire, such conviction, such enthusiasm; and never perhaps can it be so written of again. Hunt spent the night bending over this book, drawing fresh life from the pages which seemed to have been written by this stranger solely and entirely for him, so clearly did they set forth all that he had felt confusedly; as in this passage, for example.

"It ought to be a rule with every painter, never to let a picture leave his easel while it is yet capable of improvement, or of having more thought

put into it. The general effect is often perfect and pleasing and not to be improved upon, when the details and facts are altogether imperfect and unsatisfactory. It may be difficult, perhaps the most difficult task of art, to complete these details and not to hurt the general effect; but, until the artist can do this, his art is imperfect and his picture unfinished. That only is a complete picture which has both the general wholeness and effect of nature, and the inexhaustible perfection of nature's details. And it is only in the effort to unite them that a painter really improves. By aiming only at details he becomes a mechanic; by aiming only at generals he becomes a trickster: his fall in both cases is sure."*

And the writer says again:—

"Now it is indeed impossible for the painter to follow all this *(the infinity of nature)*; he cannot come up to the same degree and order of infinity, but he can give us a lesser kind of infinity. He has not one-thousandth part of the space to occupy which nature has; but he can, at least, leave no part of that space vacant and unprofitable. If nature carries out her minutiæ over miles, he has no excuse for generalising in inches. And if he will only give us all he can, if he will give us a fulness as complete and as mysterious as nature's, we will pardon him

* Modern Painters. Necessity of finishing works of art perfectly.

for its being the fulness of a cup instead of an ocean. But we will not pardon him, if, because he has not a mile to occupy, he will not occupy the inch, and because he has fewer means at his command will leave half of those in his power unexerted. Still less will we pardon him for mistaking the sport of nature for her labour, and for following her only in her hour of rest, without observing how she had worked for it. After spending centuries in raising the forest, and guiding the river, and modelling the mountain, she exults over her work in buoyancy of spirit, with playful sunbeams and flying clouds; but the painter must go through the same labour, or he must not have the same recreation. Let him chisel his rock faithfully, and tuft his forest delicately, and then we will allow him his freaks of light and shade, and thank him for them: but we must not be put off with the play before the lesson, with the adjunct instead of the essence, with the illustration instead of the fact." *

And the young painter, reading on and on in the hope of finding before he slept the watchword he had so long been seeking against academic generalisation, and the perfect model to be set up against the model of the schools, reached this page, the

* Modern Painters. The imperative necessity, in landscape painting, of fulness and finish.

last in the volume, the most daring that had ever yet been written:

"From young artists nothing ought to be tolerated but simple *bona fide* imitation of nature. They have no business to ape the execution of masters; to utter weak and disjointed repetitions of other men's words; and mimic the gestures of the preacher, without understanding his meaning or sharing his emotions. We do not want their crude ideas of composition, their unformed conceptions of the Beautiful, their unsystematized experiments on the Sublime. We scorn their velocity, for it is without direction; we reject their decision, for it is without grounds; we contemn their composition, for it is without materials; we reprobate their choice, for it is without comparison. Their duty is neither to choose, nor compose, nor imagine, nor experimentalise; but to be humble and earnest in following the steps of nature and tracing the finger of God. Nothing is so bad a symptom, in the work of young artists, as too much dexterity of handling; for it is a sign that they are satisfied with their work, and have tried to do nothing more than they were able to do. Their works should be full of failures, for these are the signs of efforts. They should keep to quiet colours, greys and browns, and, making the early works of Turner their example, as his latest

are to be their object of emulation, should go to nature in all singleness of heart, and walk with her laboriously and trustingly, having no other thoughts but how best to penetrate her meaning and remember her instructions; rejecting nothing, selecting nothing and scorning nothing." *

The watchword was found. Did Hunt sleep that night? I know not; but surely he dreamed, and there are dreams deeper and more invigorating than any slumber.

Who was the writer, who, on this page dated 1843, proclaimed the formula of Realism long before the realists, at the moment when Courbet and his peers, boys who had hardly left school, were anxiously seeking their way? He was himself almost a boy. At the age of twenty-three he had written this in a little cottage on the outskirts of London, at Herne Hill, a spur of the Surrey downs. For several years he had travelled with his parents in Italy, in Switzerland, on the Rhine, collecting documents, copying pictures, studying leaves and flowers in the microscope, rushing through museums and up mountains with a pencil in his hand, sketching the mouldings of a cornice or the outlines of a glacier. At last, moved by his admiration for Turner to attempt an apology for this great artist, he rallied all these obser-

* The duty and after privileges of all students.—Modern Painters.

vations and examples to his aid, and proclaimed to astonished England that there was nothing in the world so great as nature and as art, and that a great people, wishing to assert itself, could become artistic when it would. This was the origin of the first volume of Modern Painters; from this were to spring, during fifty years, those prodigious invocations of human memorials and things divine, of antique thought and of vanished inspiration: the "Seven Lamps of Architecture," "Stones of Venice," "Aratra Pentelice," "Val d'Arno," "Sesame and Lilies," "Queen of Air," "The Eagle's Nest," "Ariadne Florentina," "Mornings in Florence," "The Laws of Fiesole," whereby this authoritative guide, this Kneipp of æstheticism, undertakes to cure you of bad taste on the condition of blind obedience to him; works so full of analytical acumen and of creative genius that they might be called the poems of criticism.

With this admiration for the skies, the clouds, the woods, the water, the rocks, John Ruskin was to charm English imagination for fifty years, and to raise it by degrees to the enthusiasm of which the æsthetic movement was the ridiculous but perfectly sincere expression. Understanding from the first that his fellow-countrymen would not understand him if he merely spoke of the beautiful in nature and in art, he spoke of the True, the Good, the Useful, the

Moral, of biblical thought and of the curiosities of science. Single in his aim, he was multiple in his means.

By turns specialist, historian, anti-papist, moralist, economist, poet, botanist, geologist, he attracted those most opposed to the idea of beauty by the charms of his learned conversation; and through all the windings of his historic wanderings he inevitably brings them back to the same point, which is the social mission of art and its supremacy. He is the man who will later on protest against railroads because they are ugly; who will pardon the Popes because they were handsome; who will found æsthetic festivals in convents, and museums in manufacturing centres; who will revive mediæval guilds and corporations because they were picturesque; who will set up a factory in Westmoreland, of thirty women, with spinning wheels made after the pattern of the one on the belfry of Giotto; and another, at Laxey, in the Isle of Man, where the wool of the black island sheep is woven independently of any modern machine, because manual labour develops the muscles and improves the beauty of the human form.

Examples of the æsthetic despotism of Ruskin and of the submission of his admirers are known throughout England. One day the great æsthete announced that he could not understand why no one painted apple trees in flower, for nothing could be more

"æsthetic" than a flowering apple tree. The following year the walls of all the exhibitions were covered with apple trees in bloom. Another time a lady filled with a desire to copy from nature, asked him in all simplicity what subject he would recommend to her. I will send you one, he replied; and, in a few days, she beheld a cart at her door, with an immense paving stone. In no way surprised she set herself conscientiously to study the paving stone. This anecdote is *bene trovato* rather than *vero*, but I myself have remarked, at Florence, how scrupulously the prescriptions of this Kneipp of æstheticism are carried out. Certainly the tourist in Savanarola's city, who holds by the injunctions of "Mornings in Florence," might leave the banks of the Arno without having seen the Tribune, or the Pitti, or the Palazzo Vecchio, or the Loggia, or San Marco, or anything which you generally go to Florence on purpose to see. But he would have been frozen behind the funeral monument of the Marchese Strozzi Ridolfi in the cloister of Santa Maria Novella, and would have ruined his sight in a dark chapel of Santa Croce, and would only by a miracle have escaped a stiff neck or a catarrh from gazing at the Campanile in all the winds that blow, with his nose in the air and his feet in the mire. Now I have seen thirty Englishmen and women making these

æsthetic pilgrimages six days running in the order prescribed by Ruskin. I have come upon these æsthetes watching the rays of sunlight in the little chapel of the Bardi, before the Giotto, as is set forth in the 3rd book, "Before the Soldan"; examining the "Strait Gate" in the fresco of the "Triumph of Saint Thomas Aquinas"; I have seen them hurrying from Santa Maria Novella to the Uffizi at a quarter past eleven as Ruskin wills it; and from the Cathedral to the green cloister in the Spanish chapel to compare the effects of the vaulting, without a moment's delay, looking neither right nor left as they pass through the streets, so that the impression left on the eye may not be weakened. I have seen them too, stooping over the grave-stone of Galileo at the entrance to Santa Croce, bending over the stern and wearied face of the philosopher and physician, which is heedlessly trodden under foot. And in the solemn shadow of the temple, the sweet, solemn words of the great worshipper of the beautiful, made a striking impression. You forgot that this visit was part of a regular Cook's tour, that these testimonies of enthusiasm were regulated by imperious asterisks printed in far-seeing guide books. The magic of the great writer restored the idea of an æsthetic pilgrimage to the scene; you expected to see Fra Egidio and St. Louis moving

towards each other from the depths of the old chapel, silent, as in the legend when they met for the first time to embrace each other without exchanging a word, and then to part for ever. Their revivified breath passes over our petrified bodies as it were, and it seems to be their fingers which turn the pages in our hands.

At the moment when young Hunt was reading his first work John Ruskin was not yet the well-known author that he is now, read in thousands of copies, but his sharp clear voice had already a tone of authority. This authority was altogether honorary; he was listened to, he was not followed. To make a revolution in painting, the most eloquent criticism is not enough; there must be painters. John Ruskin had none around him, and he was vainly scanning the horizon of the three Kingdoms for new men whom he might make his disciples.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PRE-RAPHAELITE BATTLE

SUCH was the condition of men and matters in England when one evening in the year 1848 three young men (one of them Italian by origin, the other two English), fellow-students and friends, as sailors are friends who sail together and can depend on each other, were drinking tea with the rich man of the three. They were turning over a collection of engravings on the table, from the Campo Santo at Pisa. These frescoes were a revelation to them, weary as they all three were of the commonplaces of the schools, and long as they had been in search of a master who would deliver them from impersonal movement, stereotyed gesture, expression transferred from the classic, and weakened with every transfer from the beauty of the original.

No doubt thousands of tourists had passed by these frescoes and had not in consequence founded a new school. But such tourists were not possessed by the desire of making a position for themselves apart from the Leslies, the Mulreadys, the Maclises;

they were not inspired by the ardour of "the brave days when we were twenty-one." These young men spoke of that simple individual art, free from all studio rules and methods, the art of Benozzo Gozzoli and Orcagna, in which there is only the most scrupulous, the minutest imitation of nature, and the unaffected, limited expression of the religious idea.

See how this horse sniffs death; and this hermit, how heartily he is praying. What should the colouring of all this be? Doubtless the crisp, brilliant colour of the Van Eycks and the Francias, laid on with no substratum. Our art is commonplace because it no longer draws its inspiration direct from nature; it lost that long ago. Rubens did not, nor the Caracci, nor even Giulio Romano, nor Raphael himself. To find masters to follow unhesitatingly we must look to art before Raphael, to pre-Raphaelite art.

The night wore away, the teacups were emptied; with the last one pre-Raphaelitism was born.

These three companions were Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais. All three were endowed with great natural talents and a passionate desire for success. The trio made a perfect whole. Hunt had faith, Rossetti eloquence, and Millais talent. The Italian was more

poet, Millais more painter, Hunt more Christian. Rosetti, restless and excitable, wanted to prophesy something, it mattered not what it might be, to every new-comer. The excellent, conscientious Hunt wanted to believe, and to devote himself to some great work. The practical and ambitious Millais wanted a theory to raise him above the intelligent crowd, and thought nothing about prophecy or belief.

They all set to work. Rossetti recruited adepts rather at haphazard, as the bush, in one of La Fontaine's fables, catches the passers-by. Hunt took infinite pains to conform to the precepts of the sect; and Millais received the applause. It was said of the leader—How well he speaks! Of the disciple—What pains he takes! And of the friend—What pretty things he paints! Many years were needed to show that the second did not do what the first talked of, and that the third succeeded because he neither listened to the one nor imitated the other.

In France these revolutionaries would have contented themselves with upholding the same ideal and frequenting the same café. In England, where three admirers of Shakespeare or of Browning cannot meet without forming a Shakespeare reading party, or a society for the explanation of Browning, the pre-Raphaelites formed themselves into a Brotherhood, and, as every Englishman fancies three or

four separate letters of the alphabet after his name, they determined that each pre-Raphaelite Brother should add to his signature the initials of his new title—*P.R.B.* They even put them on the addresses of the letters they interchanged, but the real importance of this mark was on their works. Seven of the young painters of that day had the right to call themselves *P. R. B.*, for as three men of talent, even such men as Hunt, Millais and Rossetti, cannot make as much stir as a hundred ordinary beings, they added to themselves four more pre-Raphaelite brothers: Michael William Rossetti, who did not paint; Woolner, who did not paint but sometimes worked as a sculptor, when he was not gold-seeking in Australia, with his feet in frozen water and his head in the sun; Stephens, who ended by confining himself to literature; and Collinson, who was converted to Catholicism after he had tried in vain to paint an Elizabeth of Hungary, and who entered a seminary, where he was set to black boots to teach him humility. Later on, the absentees, or the discouraged, were replaced by three new-comers, Deverell, Hughes and Collins; but they were only supernumeraries, they formed the body-guard of the three founders; rallying the crowd around them, stirring up the press, creating the glory of notoriety for

those men who were, later on, to welcome the notoriety of glory. It was Rossetti, Millais and Hunt who had launched a defiance at official art; it was for them to give it battle with their feeble resources and to conquer or to disappear. *

They chose for their battlefield the illustration of Keats' famous poem, "Isabella, or the Pot of Basil," a pathetic story taken from Boccaccio. "Fair Isabel, poor simple Isabel!" was the sister of two rich Florentine merchants. In their house and in their service lived young Lorenzo, a handsome youth like every hero of romance. The youth and the maiden

> . . . "could not in the self-same mansion dwell
> Without some stir of heart, some malady;
> They could not sit at meals but feel how well
> It soothèd each to be the other by;
> They could not, sure, beneath the same roof sleep,
> But to each other dream, and nightly weep."

Isabella's brothers soon discerned the romance developing under their eyes, and as they wished to marry their sister to some great lord, and, as they lived in those happy days—for poets—when no one

* Concerning the way in which Rossetti enlisted Woolner this declaration by Mr. H. Quilter may be read with interest. "Woolner perhaps had never really been a pre-Raphaelite in intention, for we have heard that Rossetti claimed him on account of the principles upon which he had written (according to Rossetti) 'My beautiful Lady'." It is probable that the poem had been written without any principle, and that Rossetti, anxious as he was to find converts, thought that as he admired the poem his admiration must spring from pre-Raphaelitism.

shrank from the most heinous adventures, they resolved to assassinate Lorenzo. One fine morning they proposed to him to go coursing at the foot of the Apennines,

> . . . "ere the hot sun count
> His dewy rosary on the eglantine."

They galloped across the Arno, and, in a forest near the stream, they killed Lorenzo, and buried him deep in the ground. On their return—

> "They told their sister how, with sudden speed,
> Lorenzo had ta'en ship for foreign lands."

Isabella enquires of them in vain if he will not speedily return:

> . . . "They spake a tale
> Time after time to quiet her."

At last the truth is revealed to her in a vision, in which Lorenzo appears to her and says:

> "Isabel, my sweet!
> Red whortle-berries droop above my head,
> And a large flint stone weighs upon my feet;
> Around me beeches and high chestnuts shed
> Their leaves and prickly nuts."

In the morning she hastens to the forest, with her old nurse. Their eyes fall on the knife which had been used for the murder, and with it the two women dig down until they find the corpse. The distracted maiden, longing for something to cherish from the dead, severs his head and carries it home,

"PROSERPINE." D. G. ROSSETTI.

where she embalms it and hides it in a garden-pot under a sweet basil plant, which she nourishes with her tears. Henceforth she heeds nothing but this beloved basil. Day and night "she ever fed it with thin tears," and the plant grew and flourished "as by magic art," to the wonder of her brothers, who

> . . . "contrived to steal the Basil-pot
> And to examine it in secret place:
> The thing was vile with green and livid spot,
> And yet they knew it was Lorenzo's face."

Terrified they fled into banishment, carrying with them the remains of their victim. But Isabella pined away after the loss of her beloved plant, and died, "Imploring for her Basil to the last," from "the Pilgrim in his wanderings," and all who approached her.

Such was the drama, a scene from which was to be prepared by each of the pre-Raphaelites, with a rigorous application of the theories of their new school; no imitation of other masters, no generalisation, each figure to be reproduced from a single model, the design to be as original and as individual as possible, painted on white, unprepared canvas; truth was to be strained to minuteness; in one word, freedom and application, earnestness. Whilst Rossetti was still discoursing and Hunt was preparing for a scrupulous study of every detail of his subject, Millais had blocked in, sketched and finished his

picture. At the 1849 Exhibitions which all three of them invaded, Millais alone produced a work inspired by Keats' poem.

This work, which was exhibited again last spring at the Guildhall, represents Isabella and Lorenzo seated together at table. He is offering her half an orange on a plate, whilst the two brothers, one cracking a nut, the other raising a glass to his lips, cast looks of suspicion at the pair across the table. The one in front is kicking Isabella's greyhound, and driving the poor beast against his mistress's knees. Most of the guests are eating and drinking, regardless of their neighbours, as if at a *table d'hôte*. If lovers could give heed to evil omens Isabella and Lorenzo would perceive that the salt-cellar on the table is overturned. Behind them stands a servant, with a napkin under his arm, watching the feast. The costumes are Florentine, about the 14th century.

This is the canvas which Hunt called, with some reason, the most astonishing painting ever done by a youth of twenty, conscientiously following the theories of his school. Each figure was painted from one model alone; every fold, every crease in the drapery was reproduced from nature, every vein on the fingers, every reflection on the nails, every patch of light was taken from nature, nothing selected, nothing scorned. Thus each figure was a portrait;

Isabella of Mrs. Hodgkinson, the wife of Millais's step-brother; Lorenzo of William Rossetti, a very Italian type. The brother drinking is the portrait of Dante Rossetti, and the elderly guest, wiping his lips with his napkin, is William Bell Scott, a great friend of the pre-Raphaelites, a second-rate poet and a detestable painter, who left a picture, "The Eve of the Deluge," to the National Gallery, some etchings, and two volumes of memoirs. He was an eclectic character, amusing in the obstinacy with which he endeavoured to attract to materialism such refractory minds as Hunt and Rossetti.

At the same time Hunt exhibited his "Rienzi taking an oath to avenge the murder of his brother." There had been a skirmish between some of the noble factions which divided Rome. Young Rienzi is represented stretched dead upon a shield, and his brother is raising his clenched fist to heaven. Dante Rossetti sat for this figure. The landscape was painted from nature, a practice then almost unknown and still unusual in the backgrounds of historical pictures.

The third P.R.B., Dante Rossetti, exhibited a picture representing the childhood of the Virgin; not at the Academy, but at the Chinese Gallery at Hyde Park Corner to which his master, Madox Brown, had also sent his famous picture "Cordelia's Portion," a scene

taken from King Lear. So the three P.R.B.'s and the source of their inspiration made a first united effort in the spring of 1849 towards a new art.

All went well, at first. The pictures of Hunt and Millais were well hung, and when the young men reached the Academy on the morning of varnishing day they received many congratulations. Their realism did not shock the public; the "Times" was favourable and the Academy professors moderate in their criticisms. No one had remarked the mysterious letters P.R.B., the visible signs of the conspiracy, on the bars of Isabella's chair. The pre-Raphaelites even found purchasers, which in England as elsewhere, more perhaps than elsewhere, is a sign of predestination. They prepared to exhibit again in 1850 and, after a short tour in France, emboldened by their first success, they founded a small review, the "Germ," for the development and assertion of the pre-Raphaelite theory. Then it was that some one discovered the letters P.R.B. and proclaimed their meaning. This was the more easy, as the friends of the innovators expounded in each number of the "Germ" issued from January to April 1850, the secret of their preferences, their antipathies and their ambitions. The revelation was like a transformation scene. The idea that the pre-Raphaelites wished to modify anything in the æsthetic constitution of the country

overwhelmed the very people who had not been in the least shocked by their works. English Conservatism uttered a cry of alarm. It seemed as if Raphael had become a Nelson or a Wellington, something sacred, and that the pre-Raphaelite declaration might be à menace to the security of the shores of Britain. This coincided with the exhibitions of 1850, to which Millais sent "Christ with his Parents"; Hunt, "The Christian Missionaries"; and Rossetti, "The Annunciation," now at the National Gallery.* The whole press

* This picture in the National Gallery called *Ecce Ancilla Domini* is in some points a good example of pre-Raphaelitism. One of the principles of the school has been thus defined by Ruskin: "To paint things as they probably did look and happen, and not as by rules of art developed under Raphael." Now if it is borne in mind in considering this Annunciation that it was painted in 1850, it will be evident that it was a revolution in the way of simplicity, of humility, and, up to a certain point, of realism, in religious painting. As Ruskin says: "Compare the Virgin in this picture waking from her sleep on a pallet bed, in a plain room, startled by sudden words and ghostly presence, which she does not comprehend, and casting in her mind what manner of salutation this should be, with the Madonnas of the Old Masters dressed in scrupulously folded and exquisitely falling robes of blue, with edges embroidered in gold, (compare Filippo Lippi's Annunciation, National Gallery) kneeling under arcades of exquisite architecture, and receiving the angel's message with their hands folded on their hearts in the most graceful positions, and the missals they had been previously studying laid open on their knees, (see Corelli's Annunciation, National Gallery). This Annunciation differs also from those that preceded it, because it represents the angel awaking the Virgin to give her his message. The messenger himself also differs from angels as they are commonly represented, in not depending for recognition of his supernatural character, on the insertion of birds' wings at his shoulders. If we are to know him

fell upon them. The great Dickens himself descended into the arena and wrote a vigorous diatribe against Millais's picture representing Christ in Joseph's workshop. He has just wounded himself with the pincers. The Virgin is kneeling, and consoles him with a kiss. Joseph is holding his hand. The young St. John the Baptist is bringing water to stanch the wound. St. Anne is taking the pincers from the table. An apprentice is fixing a plank to resume the interrupted work.

This was a new and curiously realistic expression of the terrible prophecy:

"And one shall say unto him. What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends."

Dickens wrote: "You come . . . to the contempla-

for an angel at all, it must be by his face, which is that simply of youthful, but grave manhood. He is neither transparent in body, luminous in presence, nor auriferous in apparel,—and although there are flames beneath his feet which upbear him, so that he does not touch the earth, these are unseen by the Virgin. Mr. Rossetti in this and subsequent works of the kind, thought it better for himself and his public to make some effort towards a real notion of what actually did happen in the carpenter's cottage at Nazareth than merely to produce a variety in the pattern of Virgin, pattern of Virgin's gown, and pattern of Virgin's house, which had been set by the jewellers of the fifteenth century."—"The three colours of pre-Raphaelitism" and the "Art of England," quoted and analysed in the Ruskin handbook to the National Gallery, by E. T. Cook.

tion of a Holy Family. You will have the goodness to discharge from your minds all post-Raphael ideas, all religious aspirations, all elevating thoughts; all tender, awful, sorrowful, ennobling, sacred, graceful, or beautiful associations, and to prepare yourselves as befits such a subject—pre-Raphaelly considered—for the lowest depths of what is mean, odious, repulsive and repelling." (Household Words, June 15, 1850.)

The P.R.B.'s could not advance any plea against this terrible verdict in the "Germ," for it had died of inanition in the month of April. William Rossetti did protest in the "Spectator," but what was his single voice amidst the tempest. The sales ceased, buyers closed their purses in indignation. The struggle continued for a whole year. When the P.R.B.'s persevered in exhibiting in 1851 the outburst knew no bounds. Millais's "Mariana," and especially Hunt's "Valentine and Sylvia" were overwhelmed with opprobrium, which went so far as to demand that, as it was fully proved that the P.R.B. canvases constituted an insult to the public taste, they should be taken down from the walls of the Academy, before the close of the exhibition. They were held up to reprobation to the pupils in the schools, who received the names of the P.R.B. with hisses. The families of the young painters blushed for shame. The elder Hunt, going about his business in the City, was con-

stantly meeting friends who bet him £10 that his son's picture would be rejected from the Academy exhibition within a fortnight. More than one of them enquired if he would not flinch before the public indignation and emigrate to Australia. Madox Brown, who had refused to become a member of the confraternity but took a fatherly interest in it, saw with despair his hopes and his pupils ruined together. pre-Raphaelitism appeared to be a lost cause.

Then it was that the young man working and watching at Denmark Hill rushed to its aid. John Ruskin, with his warm heart, his combative temper, his brilliant, many-sided intellect, could not behold so unequal a strife without indignation, nor fail to envy the opportunity of fighting so glorious a battle single-handed, with the wonderful weapons which nature and study had given into his hands. He did not know the P.R.B., but he had soon distinguished amidst their confused cries a resemblance to his own language, and had perceived the promise of future talent in their incomplete essays. The disciples he dreamed of might be amongst them. He says: "That two youths of the respective ages of eighteen and twenty should have conceived for themselves a totally independent and sincere method of study, and enthusiastically persevered in it against every kind of dissuasion and opposition, is strange enough; that,

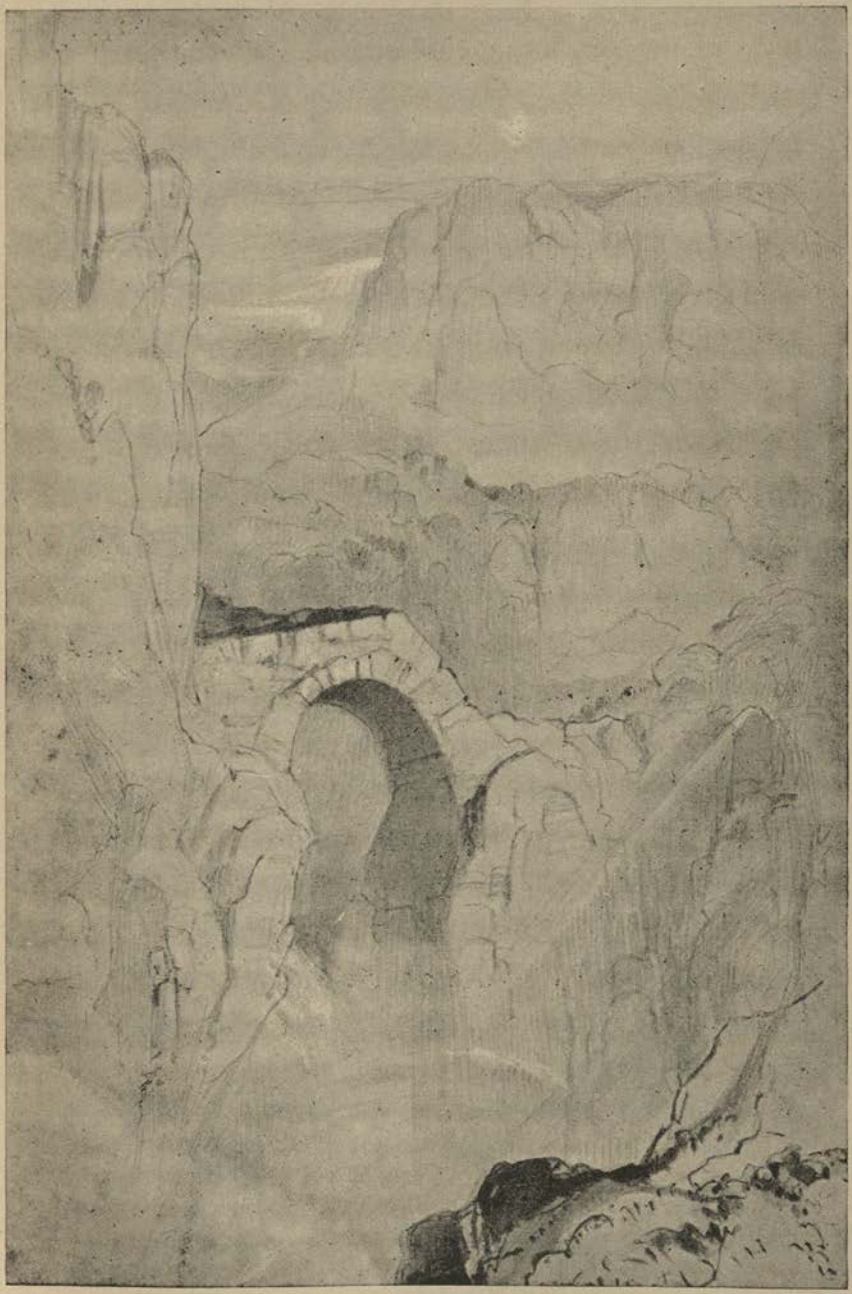
in the third or fourth year of their efforts, they should have produced works, in many parts not inferior to the best of Albert Dürer, this is perhaps not less strange. But the loudness and universality of the howl which the common critics of the press raised against them, — and the shrill, shallow laughter of those who can do neither the one nor the other, these are the strangest of all."

Then, in two famous letters addressed to the "Times," Ruskin seized on the official criticisms and dealt roughly with them. The P.R.B. had been reproached for their perspective; one of those rare questions in art that admits of demonstration. Ruskin declared that he could find worse faults in the perspective of any architectural picture by any painter in fashion. Their accuracy had been questioned. Ruskin applauded them for it, and proved, from the botanical point of view alone, that the water-lily and the water-plantain in one of their pictures was of inestimable value, and that anything to equal in truth, vigour, and finish, a bit of Hunt's work would be sought in vain amongst the canvases of the Academicians. It had been declared that the work of the P. R. B. was wanting in effect; that is to say that there were no great artificial shadows to throw up the lights. For artists this was the important point of the debate. Ruskin, with his keen perception drawn from the direct study of nature, saw the fer-

tility of the pre-Raphaelite attempt, and adopted it at once. Just as his apology for Turner in 1843 had led him by devious paths to fix the precise formula of realism, the necessity of defending the P.R.B. now led him on May 6th, 1851, thirty years in advance of the impressionists, to define the exact formula of open air effects:

"The apparent want of shade, is, however, perhaps the fault which most hurts the general eye. The fact is, nevertheless, that the fault is far more in the other pictures of the Academy, than in the pre-Raphaelite ones. It is the former that are false not the latter, except so far as every picture must be false which endeavours to represent living sunlight with dead pigments. I think Mr. Hunt has a slight tendency to exaggerate reflected lights; and, if Mr. Millais has ever been near a piece of good painted glass he ought to have known that its tone is more dusky and sober than that of his Mariana's window. But for the most part these pictures are rashly condemned because the only light we are accustomed to see represents that which falls on the artist's model in his dim painting room, not that of sunshine in the fields." *

* Ruskin, "The pre-Raphaelite Brethren" a letter to the Editor of the "Times", May 30, 1851, reproduced in "Arrows," Vol. I. Ruskin says elsewhere (Lectures on Architecture and Painting) "Every pre-Raphaelite landscape is painted to the very last touch in the open air from nature herself."



A PENCIL DRAWING. JOHN RUSKIN.

*By the courtesy of A. E. Cropper, Esq.*

Finally, after having cleared the innovators from the reproach of romanticism—a terrible accusation, fifty years ago, across the Channel—Ruskin asserted, with the imperious assurance which he has never lost, that in the pre-Raphaelites "lay in our England the foundations of a school of art, nobler than the world has seen for three hundred years."

This furious attack on the Academy disconcerted public opinion. The enemy's lines wavered. There was a fear of being mistaken. The blows slackened and the Liverpool Art Gallery ventured to advance. It commended Hunt's "Valentine and Sylvia," and the announcement decided a Belfast amateur to buy the picture without seeing it. This was a symptomatic fact. The letter announcing the purchase, like the dove returning to the Ark in Millais's picture, showed that a great crisis was past, and that new days were to dawn on a pacified world. pre-Raphaelitism was saved.

Then began a period which, if it was not one of triumph, was free from persecution. The Liverpool Academy awarded a yearly prize to one of the *P. R. B.'s.* Ruskin bought Rossetti's water-colours at so generous a price that it made the painter overlook the high inspiration of the critic, and only appreciate the wealth of the patron. Picture dealers and rich dilettanti furnished subsidies. The pre-Ra-

phaelites redoubled their efforts. Millais, Hunt and Collins, brother of Wilkie Collins, spent a summer in Surrey to study from nature backgrounds for their forthcoming pictures. In the silence and peace of the country they prepared some immortal works; Millais's "Ophelia" and the "Huguenot," Hunt's "Hireling Shepherd" and the "Light of the World." Never perhaps has such an amount of observation and perseverance been expended on the accessories of a background.

Millais painted his Ophelia floating on the river, her face turned upwards, her hands lying on the surface of the water half open as if she were giving thanks, her body half smothered in grasses, dead willow leaves, nettles, daisies and buttercups, her spreading draperies gradually becoming sodden; all that had been the maiden drifting gently with the current under the drooping boughs and the upstanding rushes towards some great river and towards death. Every leaf which he copied, every line of the poet which he followed, gave Millais infinite pains, for he would be faithful at once to Shakespeare and to nature. * At his side Hunt was

* "There is a willow grows aslant the brook,
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream,
There with fantastic garlands did she come
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies and long purples.
There on the pendant boughs, her coronet weeds

finishing the background of his "Hireling" and beginning that of the "Light of the World," the picture of Christ crowned with gold and with thorns, clad in a long tunic and the cope worn by priests when they chant Vespers. He is moving by night through a field planted with trees, and carries a lantern. He has halted before a small door, half hidden by weeds and creeping plants, at which he is knocking. It is a commentary on the words of Scripture:

"Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

To represent faithfully from nature the trees of the background and the ivy of the foreground, without invention or generalisation, in perfect truth and honesty, in the true light, Hunt for three months persisted in working in the open air in an

> Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke;
> When down her weedy trophies, and herself,
> Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide;
> And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up;
> Which time, she chanted snatches of old tunes;
> As one incapable of her own distress,
> Or like a creature native and indu'd
> Into that element; but long it could not be
> Till that her garments heavy with their drink
> Pulled the poor wretch from her melodious lay
> To muddy death."
>
> Hamlet, IV. 7.

orchard, from nine at night till five in the morning, at every full moon.

When the two friends returned to London they were met by kindly, smiling faces, and with outstretched hands. The hour of success was near. Millais was the first to reach it at the exhibition of 1852. His "Ophelia" and especially his "Huguenot," though they were attacked by some critics, gained for his cause the popular favour. Reproductions of them pervaded England. A year later he was elected Associate of the Royal Academy, and exchanged the initials *P. R. B.* for *A. R. A.*

Holman Hunt triumphed in his turn with the "Light of the World." The most elegant ladies came to his studio to admire the picture on the easel. Later on, in 1855, their master or adviser Madox Brown, touched the heart of the multitude with his "The Last of England," inspired by the departure of some unfortunate comrades to Australia, to seek their fortunes. He represented a young couple on a sailing-vessel, leaving their native land, with an expression of deep despair. This picture is now in the Birmingham Art Gallery.

Rossetti had not exhibited since 1850, but at the end of 1856, feeling that success was assured, he re-appeared in public and was greeted with enthusiastic applause. This was not at the Academy, but

at an exclusively pre-Raphaelite exhibition where the principal works of the brotherhood were assembled. There was exhibited the first water-colour sketch for "Dante's Dream," one of the most significant of Rossetti's works. Hughes had revealed himself with his triptych of the Eve of St. Agnes, taken from Keats' poem. Meanwhile Stephens, one of the first P.R.B., had obtained the important post of critic to the "Times," the paper which had shown the greatest hostility to his friends. Various artists hastened to enrol themselves under the revolutionary banner. Philosophers and poets, Carlyle and Tennyson, Coventry Patmore, and Dickens himself, the opponent of former days, supported the conquerors. Finally three young men, whose mettle was yet untried, came from Oxford to enquire from Rossetti the path to the ideal; their names were Swinburne, William Morris, and Burne-Jones.

The pre-Raphaelites amused themselves by painting each other's portraits, having time to admire themselves, now that the struggle was over, and to celebrate their victory. It was a victory indeed. It has been calculated that Millais, Hunt and Rossetti had made, between them, not less than half a million sterling. But it was also the end of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. It was long since they had signed themselves P.R.B. Many of the brothers

had left London,—Woolner for Australia, Hunt for Palestine, Collinson for a monastery, Deverell was dead, and the bundle of sticks was dispersed. In 1857 two of the absentees had returned, but amongst those who had not left their native land, one of the leaders had insensibly departed from the pre-Raphaelite ideal, and, amidst the applause of the academic world, was making for himself an increasingly independent and important position, this was Millais. The others were diverging each in the direction to which his clearer affinities and riper talents attracted him. It was in vain that Ruskin, understanding the defection of Millais, raised a cry of alarm. Ruskin himself had veered round. So this year 1857 marks a decisive date, as 1846 had done. In 1846 Haydon, head of the academic school, committed suicide, and Madox Brown exhibited his "William the Conqueror." In 1857 the school of Madox Brown was triumphant, and Millais, the head of that school, committed moral suicide. The whole movement of 1850 is comprised in these two facts. In 1846 one man trying to create a new movement could not collect an army. In 1857 every man returns to his own special work, like a soldier to his own fireside. The troops are disbanded, for there is no more for them to do: pre-Raphaelitism had conquered.

# CHAPTER III

## THE DEFINITION AND THE RESULTS OF PRE-RAPHAELITISM

But what of the victor? Now that the tournament is over, it is time to raise the lowered visor beneath which he fought. Pre-Raphaelitism is a mysterious rather than an explanatory term, and there were to be more disputes over its meaning when its cause was gained than there had been over its acceptance during the battle. The most divergent and contrary views were taken of it. Some saw in it contempt for Raphael, although Hunt, who is not merely of the pre-Raphaelites but the most pre-Raphaelite of them all, assures us in his memoirs that the Raphaels at the National Gallery were the great admiration of his youth.*

Some saw in it a fixed determination to imitate

* "Neither then, nor afterwards did we affirm that there was not much healthy and good art after the time of Raphael, but it appeared to us that afterwards art was so frequently tainted with this canker of corruption, that it was only in the earlier work we could find with certainty absolute health." "It was in a little spirit of fun, that we thus agreed that Raphael, the Prince of

the thin, dry style of the Primitives, although a single glance at the ample bosoms, the rounded shoulders and the sensual mouths of Rossetti's women, recalls the luxury and splendour of the Renascents. Some saw in it uncompromising truth unmixed with any element of imagination, although it is precisely the imaginative element which strikes the observer of any work of this school; Hunt's "Light of the World," or Rossetti's "Dante's Dream." Others saw in it a transcendent idealism, a branch of the great gothic and religious Renaissance, called the Oxford Movement, making the followers of Rossetti unconscious, but faithful and zealous fellow-labourers with Keble, Newman, and Pusey. That might be, but the definition of pre-Raphaelitism was not advanced thereby, for to characterise a pre-Raphaelite picture by saying that it was inspired by the Oxford Movement, is like attempting to explain the mechanism of a lock by describing the political opinions of the locksmith. The affinities attaching the pre-Raphaelites to Puseyism might have been a hundred times stronger and more distinct, without their leading Hunt to paint on an unprepared canvas, or

Painters, was the inspiring influence of the art of the day, for we saw the practice of contemporary painters was as different from that of the masters whose example they quoted, as established interest or indifference had ever made the conduct of disciples." —"The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood." Holman Hunt.

Millais to proscribe bitumen from his materials.* Something more precise and more relevant to the matter was required.

Then pre-Raphaelitism was reduced to one or two methods of study; such as the minute research of infinitesimal detail exacted by Ruskin, and the substitution of a living model for the lay figure, with freedom or choice indeed of a model best fitted to convey the idea of a Virgin, a Christ, or a hero, but with the restriction that a model once chosen must be scrupulously followed and copied, excluding all admixture of other features, and the idealisation of memory. But this definition entirely fails to include Madox Brown and Rossetti amongst the pre-Raphaelites. For Madox Brown never admitted that the artist should refuse to combine various models; and Rossetti, with two or three exceptions, spent his life painting from a lay figure, or even from nothing at all out of his inner consciousness.†

* See J. E. Millais, "Some Thoughts about Art."—Mag. of Art, 1888.

† As for Madox Brown, all writers agree that it was exactly this point which prevented him from joining the brotherhood. We read in F. G. Stephen's Memoirs: "Brown refused to join the society chiefly on account of a strict rule which was adopted by these painters for some time. This rule was that when a member had found a model answering to his ideal, he must paint it exactly, to a hair so to speak."—Portfolio, May 1894. As for Rossetti, we find these words of Madox Brown quoted by Mr. H. Quilter in "Preferences in Art": "He (Rossetti) had no aversion to draperies on lay figures as is generally supposed. On the contrary, far from

To make out the pre-Raphaelites to be English Meissonniers, the entomologists of painting, may describe the character of the first works of Millais and Hunt, but then those of Rossetti must be ignored. Looking at his "Beata Beatrix" at the National Gallery amongst the pictures of the Academicians of 1850, those adversaries of pre-Raphaelitism, it is the absence of detail in the work of the pre-Raphaelite, and the abundance of detail in the work of the Academicians that is so striking.

At last, tired of inventing definitions which always failed to define their subjects, some critics rose to general considerations, like village preachers who talk Latin when they find themselves becoming involved in their explanations. "Yes," exclaims one of them—(Esther Wood on D. G. Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement) "the Pre-Raphaelite Movement was much more than a revolution in ideals, or methods of painting. It was a single wave in a great tide of re-action, the ever-rising protest and rebellion of our century against tradition and conventions in every department of life. It broke out socially with the French Revolution; it found voice in the poetical impulse which followed it, in Coleridge,

disliking lay figures, he had two or three very expensively got up ones." Farther on Mr. Quilter says of Rossetti: "He used to do his water-colours in a fortnight and without models. Alas! for the theories of the P.R.B."

Shelley, and Keats. It spread from ethics to politics; it touched all morality and all knowledge; it affected the whole literature of Europe from psychology to fiction, from the drama to lyric poetry. Schumann and Chopin breathed it into music. Darwin reforming the world of science, laid, in the doctrine of evolution, the foundation of the new cosmogony."

At this point all foothold is lost, and it appears as if a school of art, resembling so many things foreign to art, is not sufficiently dissimilar to its rivals for a picture belonging to it to be recognisable from description. Too narrow if restricted to the research of detail, the definition of pre-Raphaelitism becomes too broad when it is extended to the conquest of a new philosophy. In the one case pre-Raphaelitism has no bounds; in the other it has too many limitations. Holding the former view, it must be admitted that the pre-Raphaelites have all, more or less, renounced their æsthetic convictions; adopting the second, that those convictions can have been neither very strong nor very clear.

And yet they had convictions; but to comprehend them the pre-Raphaelite theory must first be cleared of all that has been written and printed and falsely believed as to the aim and end of pre-Raphaelitism. It must at least be remembered that this narrow realistic theory was never more than a method of

education used by young painters of twenty, invented by them as a necessary tool to be cast aside later; a scheme of study, not a plan for realisation; an apprentice's manual, not a Bible of the ideal; a road, not a goal.* If in moments of exaggeration, common to youth, some of the writers in the "Germ" understood this otherwise, they were mistaken. It is a great mistake to look in a collection of the "Germ," where neither Millais, Hunt nor Rossetti put forth his ideas, for the secret of their hopes for art. Let us look rather to their work. Rossetti, deviating rarely from self-imposed rules, has proved that in his eyes minute realism is not the end of art. Millais deserted the pre-Raphaelite theories at the age of twenty-eight, and demonstrated yet more clearly that he considered them to be leading-strings, which he could some day dispense with. And Hunt? it may be asked. Hunt thought exactly the same.

"Admitting that we must elaborate our first works as minutely as possible," he says, "we never intended to say more than that this practice is essential to exercise the young artist's eye and hand. We should never have admitted that to quit this method of working in riper years was to be any the less a

* This advice was given to students, not to artists; not with respect to picture making, but to open their eyes to nature, and to train their hands to a fuller, freer school than the dusty gallery of antiques.—Collingwood. "Art Teaching of J. Ruskin."

pre-Raphaelite."—(The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.) Ruskin himself who is so often accused of exaggeration, had already pointed out in 1843, in the book that Hunt read by night in his youth, that the realistic study of nature was, in his eyes, only one means of education. Directly after the watch-words, "Neglect nothing, scorn nothing, select nothing," which are always quoted, follow these which are never quoted and which are indispensable to establish his idea.

"Then when their memories are stored, and their imaginations fed, and their hands firm, let them take up the scarlet and the gold, give the reins to their fancy, and show us what their heads are made of. We will follow them wherever they choose to lead; we will check at nothing; they are then our masters, and are fit to be so. They have placed themselves above our criticism, and we will listen to their words in all faith and humility; but not unless they themselves have before bowed, in the same submission, to a higher authority and master."*

It is therefore neither very strange nor very shocking if Madox Brown, who knew more about it than his disciples, did not confine himself to their method, and if Rossetti soon cast it aside after one

* Modern Painters. "The Duty and after Privileges of all Students."

or two partial realisations, as in the "Annunciation," and "Found!"—and if Millais followed his example a few years later. For there is not a single pre-Raphaelite who has not deserted the realistic method at some given time. And to endeavour to identify pre-Raphaelitism with the pre-Raphaelite theory of its early days, might lead to the conclusion that it has been renounced by all its adherents. *

There was then something more lasting than the pre-Raphaelite theory. There was an idea, which united the innovators more closely and guided them for a longer time. To discover this idea theory must be set aside and practice examined; the collections of newspapers in which the P. R. B. wrote must no longer be consulted, but their pictures must be visited in galleries and museums; in short they must no longer be judged by their words, but

* From the very first Mr. Millais's strong good sense showed him the exaggerations of the minute method. W. Bell Scott relates that he went to see the young artist in his studio, soon after the birth of the Brotherhood, and found there an Italian engraving by Agostino Lauro, dated 1845, entitled "Meditation," representing a young girl sitting under some trees. "Every leaf of every plant, more than that, the halves of each leaf springing from the centre rib were carefully represented even in shadow, as was the pattern on the girl's dress. I was looking at the engraving when Millais left his easel, and said: 'Ah! you have observed that, have you. Is it not pre-Raphaelite enough? We have not come up to that yet. I for one won't try. It is all nonsense. Nature is nature, and art is art. One could not live doing that.'"—Autobiographical Notes, Vol. I.

by their works. In all of these there appears the same vigorous effort, the same desperate attempt to escape from the expressionless gestures and the feeble colouring of the Academicians of 1850. Whatever the work, whoever the master, whatever the period chosen, (excepting the second part of Millais's life) these two characteristics are constantly present; originality of gesture and vivid colouring. The heads may droop too low in meditation; sometimes the arms are more subtly twisted than is necessary to obtain a novel gesture, or to express something fresh in the human form, like branches of fruit trees trained into strange contortions along an espalier.

The desire to emphasize the significance of the simplest attitudes, to present the usual play of the muscles in a fresh light is often carried to extremes. In many cases, on the contrary, the search for original gesture by modifying the false view of a classical pose simply restores the truth of nature. On the other hand, the colours are often glaring from crudity of contrast; they are left raw and not worked up, and the touches, unskilfully applied to obtain a difficult tone, shock the eye; the painter's contempt for "mixing" having precluded any softening of his laboured efforts. But the same research is apparent throughout for good or for evil. As a

quality or as a fault, the expressive originality of gesture, the crude vigour of touch may be found in any pre-raphaelite canvas; whilst they are wanting in all those that preceded them.

They are to be found in Madox Brown's "Christ washing the feet of Peter," in the National Gallery; in the bent head of Saint Peter, in his wrinkled forehead, in his knees drawn up to his chin, in his hands clasping his knee, in all the play of the human machinery strained by the expression of painful thought, in which the unenlightened apostle is absorbed. It is the same significant attitude which Holman Hunt was to give later on to his Rabbi Johanan ben Zak Kai listening to the Child Jesus in the Temple. The striving after a vivid colouring is apparent in the violent tones of the copper basin and of the feet of Saint Peter, which exceed in impressionist force the most startling paradoxes of the contemporary Norwegian school. These characteristics are also to be found in Rossetti's "Beata Beatrix," a few yards from Madox Brown's "Saint Peter," with her head mournfully thrown back, her throat spreading like a fan, her half-closed eyelids, her half-opened mouth, her hands lying on her knees in an attitude of extreme languor and prostration; the whole colouring of vivid greens and reds, oranges and violets, fresh and firm, and even

transparent, compared with the browns of the academic school. *

These characteristics are found in all Hunt's work, and in that of Millais long after the time when he was accused of having deserted pre-Raphaelitism. Only they were obtained by very different methods. Whilst some painters, like Hunt and Millais, tried at first to catch the original gesture by that scrupulous observation of nature which is an excellent school for originality, because nature contains inexhaustible stores of fresh aspects, and were striving to follow the individual peculiarities of each model, Rossetti attained it by working his brain, by stimu-

* This picture represents Dante's Beatrice seated on the balcony of her father's palace at Florence. The maiden is seated against the light, and stands out darkly on the horizon. She has just received the revelation of a new life. Through the window are seen the Arno, the bridge, the towers, and the palaces of the city in which Dante and Beatrice spent their lives until the fatal month of June in 1290, when she died, and the whole city was bereaved and despoiled of dignity. Near to her a sundial marks the fatal hour, the passing light casts a kind of natural halo round the figure. A red nimbed dove, like the one in the Annunciation, is bringing her a white poppy, the mystic flower in which Rossetti would unite the emblems of death and chastity. Beatrice's face recalls that of Rossetti's dead wife. In the background is the poet Dante gazing fixedly on the figure of Love, which bears a flaming heart, and is crossing the opposite side of the picture as if summoning him to follow. "I did not intend," Rossetti wrote, "to represent the death of Beatrice, but her agony suddenly caught away in ecstasy. Through her closed eyelids she is conscious of the new world, thus described in the closing words of the *Vita Nuova: Quella beata Beatrice che gloriosamente mira nella faccia di colui, qui est per omnia secula benedictus.*"

lating his imagination, by expressing his ideal only when he had completely stripped from it all borrowed forms, all repetition of the works of other masters. Therefore he drew his figures very little from nature, and very greatly from his imagination. The strong, but not black, tones, fresh and varied, that Hunt and Millais took from Surrey landscapes copied in the open air, Rossetti obtained by bold experiments in the studio, by unexpected contrasts, by continual trials on his palette; ideal experiments, the fruitlessness of which often reduced him to despair.

These characteristics may also be found in one of their contemporaries, a victor in the Westminster competition of 1844, who has never been classed with the pre-Raphaelites because he never joined the brotherhood or was even amongst their intimate friends, but who had discovered for himself at the same time, and by the self-same methods, the reforms of pre-Raphaelitism. I am speaking of G. F. Watts. He was older than most of the pre-Raphaelites, and had lamented like them, and before them, the English academical method of colouring. That method, as it existed both in France and in England in 1850, is well known. First of all bitumen and warm tints, such as light red, were rubbed into the canvas; then upon this groundwork, which never dried

owing to the bitumen, were dabbed in touches of bright colour; by this means transparency was quickly and easily obtained, with delightful harmonies, which fascinated beginners and even advanced students. By and bye this early beauty fled: the tones obtained by these strongly diluted mixtures fading into a glazing of sweet-stuff; the outlines unsustained by a sufficient body of colour fell flat, sank into the canvas, and, worst of all, the bitumen never hardened, and being imprisoned under the dry colour, like water beneath ice, felt the variations of temperature, and cracked the surface in its efforts to pierce through it.

Whilst Millais and Hunt were in search of the method of painting on a clean canvas which they adopted, Watts was also making his own investigations, and daring to oppose the academic errors. Relinquishing the hope of obtaining transparency easily and at the outset, he resolved to use only opaque colours, and instead of painting on a heavy ground he painted on a very light one, and waited for it to dry completely, so that it took the colour like canvas or wood. He considered that if such grounds should work through in the course of time they would light up the picture instead of darkening it: and this is exactly what has happened. All this is now no secret, but at the time when Watts,

Millais, and Hunt were beginners, an acute intelligence was required to understand it, and great energy to carry it out. *

At last, in his anxiety to avoid mixing colours of different constituents, which produces disastrous chemical combinations, Watts bethought him of laying on one colour beside the other, and not upon the other, as far as possible; that is to say, to produce a yellowish red tint, instead of mixing yellow and red, he laid on a touch of yellow and then a touch of red, substituting for a mixture juxtaposition, which produces almost the same effect at a certain distance from the eye. These methods, which our "pointillistes" are claiming as a new discovery, connect Watts with the great school of the pre-Raphaelites. He was yearning for originality of gesture and freedom of colour as they were and when they were; and if he did not become a member of their narrow creed, he was always inspired by the spirit of it.

Thus, looked at as a whole from Madox Brown to Millais, from Watts to Rossetti, from the Westminster cartoons to the "Last of England," from "Isabella" to the "Huguenot," as from the "An-

* Mrs. Barrington. Catalogue of Paintings by G. F. Watts, R.A., on exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 1884. The Works of G. F. Watts, R.A. (Pall Mall Gazette, extra).—H. Quilter. The Art of Watts.

nunciation" to "Dante's Dream," the movement of 1850 was this: new men longing for a new art, substituting strange, novel, individual gesture, for commonplace generalisations; and fresh, dry, pure colour, brilliant by its juxtapositions, for sunken, overlaid colour; in one word they exchanged the line of expression for the line of decoration, and clear tones for hot tones. In its simplicity this was pre-Raphaelitism. The rest is but words.*

But this residuum of truth which we find at the basis of pre-Raphaelite theories, this "precipitate" which remains in the alembic of analysis after the conceptions of advanced æstheticism have been dissipated in smoke, is not to be despised. To seek for exact, in place of vague, action, be it by the minuteness of a Meissonnier,—and to obtain expressive, in place of merely decorative, forms, be it by the extravagant imagination of a Gustave Doré, is a grand step, and it is the step that was required in 1850. When an Academy, or a school, is dominated by generalisations that school is lost; it must, by some means, relax its rules, it must break up its stereotypes, throw away its casts, drive out the models who assume of themselves the pose of

* These lines were already written when the new Memoirs of Eugène Delacroix appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. He calls the pre-Raphaelite school "the dry school", and this defines it exactly for a painter.

Jupiter Tonans, or of Venus rising from the waves, and confound the pretentious lines which express no definite attitude, but a state of body and mind applicable to all ideas and feelings as a whole; because in such a case dexterity is taught instead of study, and the student arrives at the result without perceiving by what means he has done so. At the moment when he is about to outline from memory the arm of Tatius hurling his javelin, (from the picture of the "Sabines") he should pause to ask himself if that is the most individual gesture that could be given to it; and if he really knows, as David knew, what this periphrase means, before he ventures to make use of it. Not that the art of generalisation is to be despised—art generalises every time that it makes an advance—but because in approaching any general idea a knowledge is required of the special ideas which gave it birth; because in making use of a comprehensive, or of a dignified line, a knowledge is required of what it comprehends or dignifies; in one word to be able to speak a literary language you must first speak the vulgar tongue. The academicians of 1850 could do so no longer. The generalisation of form was to them no longer the foremost difficulty to be grappled with after all the rest had been overcome, but a collection of hereditary recipes of magic formulæ,

handed down without analysis, and followed without a knowledge of their contents.*

As regards colouring the step was no less important. No one would think of condemning the warm tones of Titian, Rembrandt and Van Dyck, nor of being shocked at their obtaining them on a more or less heavy ground-work. But the prescriptions in which the attempt has been made to codify their methods without a thorough knowledge of them are deplorable, because these prescriptions would facilitate what ought to be laborious by the avoidance of necessary effort, and, by enabling the student to attain at once to mediocrity, they fail to provide him with the means of rising to his best. From the day when a school produces excellent copies of old masters instead of new creations it is a false school. When it teaches men to slur over difficulties instead of grappling with them, it loses its excuse for existence. To obtain transparency by painting over bitumen is easier than to obtain it by simple juxtapositions of solid colour; to produce an effect by the artificial opposition of a dark foreground and a brilliant middle distance, is easier

* Pre-Raphaelitism was, as is well said by Mr. P. G. Hamerton, one of the combatants of its early years, "a strong and beneficial reaction from indolent synthesis to laborious analysis, and from mental inactivity to new thought and motion."—Thoughts about Art, 1889.

than to obtain it by a well-balanced harmony of tones, but this effect is poorer in quality and this transparency holds a danger in store. The bitumen which Haydon conscientiously rubbed into his canvas before he began to paint, in order no doubt to obtain that subdued colour which the English prized so much after Reynolds; those large dark splotches introduced by the Academicians into their compositions to throw up the light in the right place; these were traditions which had to be broken through at any cost. The pre-Raphaelites by adopting a plain white canvas for their only ground, and for their system of lighting only "the system of the sun", as Ruskin called it—that is to say, simply the open air—may perhaps have been guilty of exaggeration, but they saved English painting.*

When the early pre-Raphaelite pictures are examined (Millais's "Isabella," for example) the naturalistic and impressionist discoveries in it are astounding, made by this twenty-years-old painter, thanks to the delicacy of his eye. There is no diffused shadow in it without luminous points, without the reflections from moving luminous objects. There are imperceptible

* The third falsehood was that they had no system of light and shade. To which it may be simply replied that their system of light and shade is exactly the same as the sun's; which is, I believe, likely to outlast that of the Renaissance, however brilliant it is.—J. Ruskin. "Pre-Raphaelitism."

tible lights even in the cast shadows, shadows from the nostrils on Lorenzo's face, from the bands of her hair on Isabella's; and this constant play of effect gives to the dryest painting the scintillation of light and the movement of life. It is clear and joyous compared with the best academic canvases of 1849.

The same quality, in lesser degree, is seen in Mr. Hunt's pictures; no foil, no artificial shadow, no combination of screens or shutters. The painter painted light wherever he saw it; even in the tiny hand of the kneeling child who holds a fly-whisk, in his picture of "Christ found in the Temple." This laborious, indefatigable, vehement research into the manifold effects of sunlight, its lights and cross-lights, concentrated and scattered, its arpeggios and its shakes, its inundations and its infiltrations, its thousand reflections and counter-reflections, without any plan or selection, appears at first to be as puzzling and irritating as the tales of wicked fairies who compel a poor girl to pick up a necklace of pearls scattered about a forest. But by degrees the skein is unravelled, the threads disentangled, the whole appears as it was meant to be by nature, and although the colours are still very unpleasing, the lights harmonise with, and respond to, one another, the pearls unite one by one to re-make the necklace.

A first glance at Mr. Hunt's "Deserted Flock,"

gives one the impression of an injury.* The blood-red sheep in indigo bushes, on rocks chiselled like sugar-candy, under an audacious sky, recall the worst excesses of our "luminists;" and, remembering that this picture dates forty-one years back, it is a question whether it is not one of the earliest manifestations of the open-air school, and whether the violet horses of M. Besnard are not the descendants, by a strange pedigree, of the red sheep of Mr. Hunt. Although imperfect as realisations, these attempts are very valuable as such. The tones, laid on one beside the other are often excruciating, but their dissonance is sometimes very powerful. With all his extravagances Hunt made a colour speak, which before him had slumbered heavily. Sometimes it is only a flash, but by this flash it may be seen how right the P.R.B. were to desert the studio for the fields, and a misunderstood tradition for nature, even if she were but imperfectly revealed to them. It was but a phrase, but those who used it imperfectly foresaw the fertility of the idea of the system

* The picture belongs to Mr. G. L. Craik. It was painted from nature on the cliffs near Hastings in 1853. Ruskin declares that "the pure natural green and tufted gold of the herbage in the hollow of that little sea cliff must be recognised for true merely by a minute's pause of attention. Standing long before the picture, you were soothed by it, and raised into such peace as you are intended to find in the glory and stillness of summer, possessing all things."—Art of England.

of the sun, as opposed to the system of the Renascents. Thus it came to pass that the P.R.B. often touched upon modern discoveries. They often lisped out the first words of our last æsthetic revolution. Looking at them gives the same impression as reading Vauban's "*Dixme royale*": it is a new world not clearly in sight as yet, but instinctively foreseen, and half foretold. It must not be imagined therefore, that the reduction of pre-Raphaelitism to originality of line and freedom of colouring degrades its position; on the contrary it is aggrandised by so doing. The name of their magazine the "Germ" was well chosen, for pre-Raphaelitism contained in germ all the contemporary art of painting.*

Whatever may have been their theories, or those of their friends, whatever the goal they aimed at, or which was attributed to them, the pre-Raphaelites greatly modified their countrymen's ideas of line and colour. Unconsciously perhaps, certainly without any very definite intention, they introduced into England

* This is a reason the more for considering the formation of Madox Brown's style in the school of Baron Wappers at Antwerp, as one of the sources of pre-Raphaelitism. This is how M. Jules Breton, who worked in the Belgian painter's studio, describes his teaching. "He taught those who were painting to detach the washes and touches placed one against the other as in a Mosaic, and to colour the shadows of the flesh with warm glazes, half tints of greenish grey, and yellow and rose lights to express the vibrations of life. Our impressionists, it is evident, have invented nothing."—Vie d'un Artiste. Jules Breton, Paris 1889.

the practice of deepening the expression of a subject by significant gestures, and of procuring brilliancy of tone by great simplicity of method. Whether that could furnish England with master-pieces remains to be seen after the chief productions of English contemporary art have been examined; but it must certainly produce new work, and a national art. Perhaps the pre-Raphaelites may not have gained the battle they fought, but they gained another. Perhaps they may not have proved that nature is the final expression of art, but they proved that it was the foundation of it, and that the efforts of a Pleiad of men of talent and resolution are never lost, whatever may have been their object.

When we look back now, after the lapse of years, to this handful of pre-Raphaelites setting out to conquer the Holy Land of Art, we seem to be gazing on one of the last Crusades. They sallied forth in 1848 all clothed in the same armour, enrolled under the same flag. How many of them have reached 1895?

Some, like Deverell, died by the way, before they saw the shining roofs and towers of the Holy City. Others, like Millais, are kings of some island, and have forgotten the aim of their expedition amidst the honours heaped upon them by the infidels. Others, passing by some convent on a sloping hill

side, said to themselves that the road was long, the return uncertain; they entered, attracted by the bells, those sirens of heaven, and no one knows their fate. Some attained to the Jerusalem of art and planted their standard there. But what a standard! Changed indeed is the pre-Raphaelite standard of early days! The battle breeze, the gloss of age has dulled its once startling hues. Such as it is, however, it floats from one of the summits of the century, a token of the noblest attempt, the grandest effort of modern artists. And it may be said of pre-Raphaelitism as was said of the Crusades, that it did not perhaps exactly fulfil its purpose, but that it realised a purpose more lasting and more universal, which has been not unfruitful for the renewing of the old world and for the glory of Christianity. *

* Here is an example of how pre-Raphaelitism is appreciated as a whole by two writers, who are not specially in favour of it.

"The influence of this school on the last quarter of a century has been distinctly beneficial. It has led to the direct study of nature, setting little value on conventional rules drawn from the antique, and although it was mistaken in unjustly despising the principles of composition founded on the experience of centuries, it has nevertheless worked a great reform."—G. H. Shepherd. "A Short History of the British School of Painting."

"On the whole English art has been improved rather than injured by what was called the pre-Raphaelite heresy, for the zeal and earnestness of its adepts counterbalance the evil caused by the many bad pictures produced by many painters, who concerned themselves merely with making money and worked only to sell." —R. Redgrave, R.A. "A Century of Painters."

And, to appreciate the impulse given by pre-Raphaelitism even

to branches of art quite distinct from painting, read these words of the great decorator—Walter Crane:

"To trace the genesis of our revival we must go back to the days of the P.R.B. Although none of them were decorative designers in the strict sense, unless we except D. G. Rossetti, yet, by their resolute and enthusiastic return to the direct symbolism, frank naturalism and poetic, or romantic, sentiment of mediæval art, with the power of modern analysis superadded, and, last, but not least, their intense love of detail, turned attention to other branches of design than painting."—W. Crane. "The English Revival of Decorative Art." Fortnightly Review.

# PART II.

## The Living Masters.

## NOTE

This chapter was written prior to the deaths of Lord Leighton, Sir John Millais and Mr. William Morris.

*[To face page 83.*

# THE LIVING MASTERS

At the present day there is no longer any violent pre-Raphaelite schism, nor any immutable academic dogma. New artists have arisen, the old ones have grown wise; the former have borrowed more than they believe from the principles of the brotherhood, the latter have relinquished more than they would admit, and all are moving in a totally different atmosphere from that of the "little masters" of 1850. But this great æsthetic revolution of the middle of the century, this break in the current of English art which took place fifty years ago, must be narrated to explain this transformation, to see how Hunt's "Scape-goat" could succeed to Landseer's lap-dogs, and how Burne-Jones could fill the place that Wilkie had occupied in the British imagination. With this revolution analysed, and the origin of present-day art fixed, we reach the heart of this study: English painting of to-day, (not of yesterday) as it is represented by a certain number of living masters.

We do not select these masters. They are forced upon us, either by their originality, by their power,

or by their reputation. They are on the whole the same men as Ruskin named when he would characterise the Art of England. Their genius may be called in question, but not their importance. No English hand would venture to strike Watts off the list; the man who is honoured with a whole room to himself at S. Kensington and who has refused the dignity of a baronetcy; nor Hunt, whose "Light of the World" has made him famous even amongst the Lancashire artisans; nor Sir John Millais, the most popular of English painters, as he is called; nor Alma Tadema, known to the whole world; nor Herkomer, the favourite of all the London portrait painters; nor Sir E. Burne-Jones, whose name is enough; nor Sir F. Leighton, the President of the Royal Academy.

As it will be found that each one of them represents a different style, we shall examine almost the whole of English art with them, and we shall judge of it by their works.

Certainly these seven masters are not the only ones, but they are the greatest. They do not exhaust every style, but they comprise them all. There are artists who are their equals, but none who obscure or who complement them; and after studying them to wish to pass to the analysis of Mr. X and Mr. Y, who are known only within the walls of Burlington House, would be like refusing

to pronounce judgment on the Umbrian school, after considering Gentile da Fabriano, Lorenzo, Niccolo di Foligno, Perugino and Pinturicchio, without studying deeply the works of Rocco Zoppo or of Sinibaldo Ibi.

One great artist's name is absent from this portrait gallery: that of William Morris. But he is a decorator, a tapestry weaver, a furniture maker, a master glazier, a printer, poet, socialist, club orator, rather than a painter; and it is painting that is treated of here. He will be spoken of, first on account of his working with Burne-Jones, secondly on account of the social aim which he assigns to all art; but a special place cannot be given to him amongst contemporary English painters. Moreover, the characteristics of his art blend so well with those of Burne-Jones, that the line we have taken—of leaving him to rule over the decorative art and æsthetic furniture of the 19th century—better befits both his fame and the facts of the case.

# CHAPTER I

## MYTHIC ART.—G. F. WATTS, R.A.

WATTS said lately to a friend: "I paint ideas, not things." The saying requires definition. Ideas, if they are not the whole of art, are the whole of Watts. They have inspired his career; they are his reason for existence. If Watts paints, it is not for his own pleasure, nor for that of others. He paints to serve his generation. He paints to teach cockneys morality, and to make clubmen consider their destinies. It is as if an angel had come down from heaven and said to him in English: "Work! No matter if your pictures are bad, you must save souls." For the proper mission of art is to urge men to higher things and thoughts, and, to fulfil this mission, the artist strives to incarnate in his art an echo of the vital interests of life; something that may suggest more to human nature as a whole, than the purely artistic conception of his subject. "My aim is now and always will be to the end, not so much to paint pictures which are delightful to the eye, but which will strike the

intelligence and the imagination, to kindle what is good and noble in them, and which will appeal to the heart." He has been well called "the painter of eternal truths." It would be difficult to find one of his pictures which might not be a sermon. "Time, Judgment, and Death," "Mammon," "Cain," the "Chastisement of Paolo and Francesca," the "Angel of Death," "Conscience," "Sic Transit," the "Spirit of Christianity," these are the subjects which this old man of eighty has been treating all his life long. He has painted a good many portraits also, because a portrait is "the window of the soul;" but no still life, no landscapes, because landscapes prove nothing. Moreover, he only attempts to prove universal dogmas which all confessions can accept. If the Parliament of Religions held at Chicago under the presidency of a cardinal, assisted by a Brahmin and a schismatic, had wanted to decorate its meeting-hall with religious pictures, it is to Watts that it should have gone for them, and the master, no doubt, would have accepted the mission; for he thinks that nothing does more honour to an artist, and that "art losing its great mission, being no longer employed in the service of the State or of Religion, is in danger of losing its character as a great intellectual utterance."

He himself neglects nothing that can advance his

proselytism by the brush. If the crowd does not come to him, he goes to the crowd with a freedom of manner which French artists would not adopt. But he only goes to the crowd in order to raise it up to himself. We too often try to reach the heart of the masses by a sacrifice of æsthetic dignity; he only tries to catch their eye without conceding anything to their tastes or fancies. We would willingly admit pictures of everyday life into our churches; he would like to put scenes from the Bible in the railway stations. One of the great regrets of his life was not being allowed to paint the History of Cosmos in Euston Station. On the refusal of the company's directors he turned to the lawyers, and obtained their permission to cover a large wall in the New Hall at Lincoln's Inn with frescoes; he went to the clergy, and decorated the church of St. James the Less. His own abode, Little Holland House at Kensington, is filled with large mythical works, and is thrown open on Sundays to all comers. At his death, he has bequeathed all these works to the nation. As they are addressed to the human race as a whole, each nation is to have a share, and one of them has been already sent to America.

To scatter the seeds of stern resolution and manly thought to East and to West is enough for Watts; he is indifferent to glory, and fame only

"THE INFANCY OF JUPITER." G. F. WATTS, R.A.

worries him. Criticism passes by his door and is not invited to enter in. He has refused the title of baronet, and consented reluctantly that his biography should be written. He does not even think that he has painted well; he thinks that he has done something better—his duty.

"To produce great works," he wrote to a friend one day, "one ought to be intent upon doing one's utmost, and never stop to consider whether the thing be great or small in abstract, the really great is so far beyond one's reach that comparison becomes an unworthy consideration. To work with all one's heart, but with all singleness of heart, that is the right thing, and whoso does this may feel satisfied whatever the result of his labours may be. If I have shown the way to better things, I shall be very well contented, but I neither expect nor desire that my work may be considered a great one."

Mr. Watts is not only an idealist in the subjects he treats and the aim he pursues, but still more by the methods he employs. It is not merely his general conception of art which connects it with moral dogmas, it is his method, his individual manner of composing, drawing and painting. He is guided in everything by ideas not by things, not by the idea of beauty, but of appropriateness, of dignity, of stability. He never chooses a subject

for mere beauty of form, for he does not consider form in the first place. His ideas do not spring forth clothed, armed, clad in lines and colours, but quite bare; as, for example, the idea that the only riches in heaven are the gifts made upon earth. For six, ten, fifteen years his ideas sometimes wander through the world of things seeking a covering, like the hermit-crab on the shore. Until then it is only by a figure of speech that he can be said to imagine them; as they are not clothed with forms it would be more exact to say that he conceives them.

In 1869 he was painting the portrait of a young man, rich, clever, and distinguished, for whom the happiest of futures seemed to be in store; but his health was undermined by incurable disease. The sittings were at certain intervals. At each one, the artist, alive to the slightest expression of the face, felt that the evil was advancing, and the end drawing near. He remarked at the same time the anxious looks of the parents, the betrothed, the friends of his sitter. All that affection could do was done to retard for awhile death, hovering over his dwelling. Then it was that the idea occurred to Watts of a mythical allegory: "Love and Death."

This is a pure conception. It borrows nothing but the mere idea from the sight before the painter's eyes. The idea will be one day transformed into a

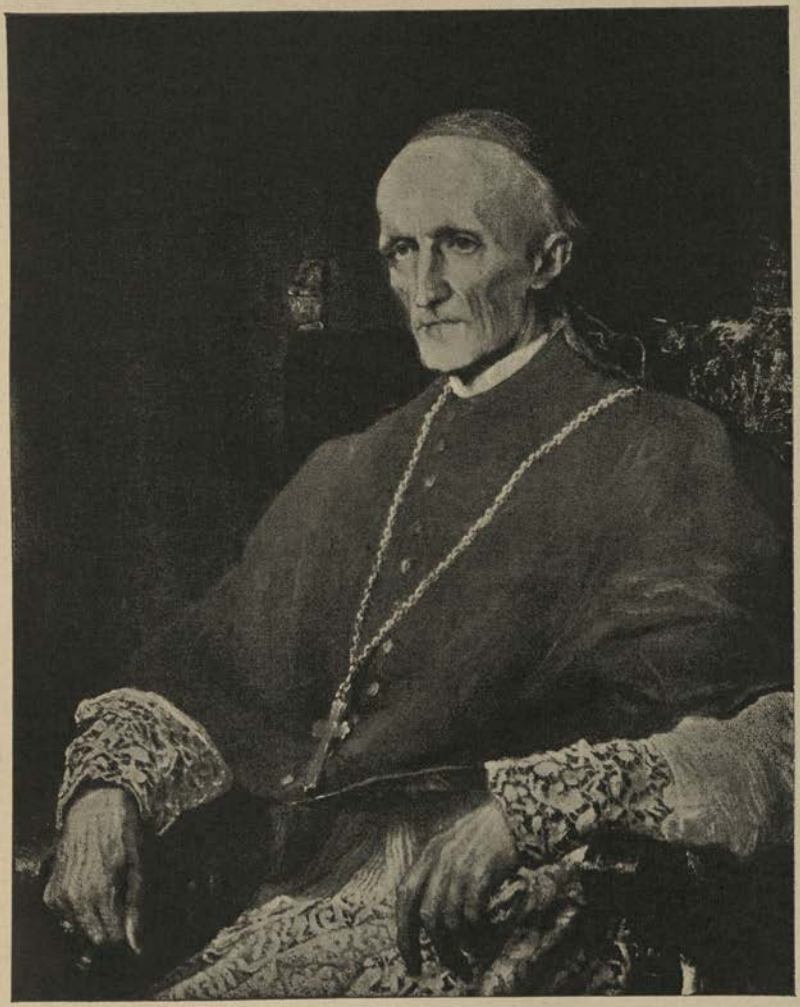
picture; of a winged child, falling against a door in which his quivering wings are crushed, striving to repulse, with his outstretched arm, a massive phantom with enormous shoulders, which easily passes him by. This idea lay dormant in Watt's mind for fourteen years; at last it took shape, and after many developments became the "Love and Death," which is now in his studio, after having been hung for a long time on a staircase at the South Kensington Museum.

His drawing and colouring are also governed by his independent ideas of the impressions made by art. For serious subjects he employs serious colouring, and for other subjects different tones. We are reminded of Poussin's saying, "Not only our taste must judge, but our reason." Then, as it is not fitting that eternal truths should be expressed in language that fades like the grass of the field, Watts proscribes all mediums, all dilution of the oils or of any other substance, all mixtures of colours, of the durability of which he was not assured. He lays his colours on dry and clean without moistening them, touch by touch, stroke by stroke, as in pastels. No matter if it looks less well, it is more lasting. His drawing is even more inspired by a pre-conceived idea than by nature. Mr. Watts does indeed arrange a model in front of him, but he does not look at it.

If he were to gaze at it, the living being might alter his pre-conceived idea of the myth, and it is the myth alone that concerns him. He does not even look at the sitters for his portraits. He reads them, he listens to them, he experiments upon them in some way, so as to seize upon the distinctive features, giving them their individuality which only recur to mind in a remembrance of them. What more could a model teach him in his compositions? How such a person is made? He would paint humanity, and no one man is that. It was thus that he replied to the precisians who wished to prohibit him from doing what he alone did for a long time in England—painting the nude figure:—

"See," he said, "this picture of 'Mammon.' The creature crushes under one foot the undraped figure of the boy, and his heavy hand he lays coarsely and brutally on the girl's head. Why have I painted these little victims naked? Because they are types of humanity, and if they had been clothed (and therefore individualised) the force of my meaning and teaching would be altogether gone. They would cease to be types."

There is a patriotic idea too, besides the philosophic and religious one, which has guided the hand of Watts in the grand and solemn outlines of his figures. To do noble work was the first ambition



CARDINAL MANNING. G. F. WATTS, R.A.

of his youth, the first cry from his heart to his only master, the marbles of Phidias. Why to do noble work? Because it is more lovely than vulgar work? No! because it is more honourable for England.

In studying art antecedent to pre-Raphaelitism, we have seen that when Watts appeared the whole genius of the painters of that day was devoted to painting in detail the costumes of Goldsmith's comic characters, or to producing the gloss on the coat of a dog in a kennel. It might have been said that the English had never been moved by the great scenes of history, or by the high ideals of philosophy. And yet they had a noble literature, a lofty school of poetry in no wise inferior to that of other nations. Was it possible that their painting,—"this mirror wherein is reflected the character of men and of nations, or rather this microscope which magnifies their character an hundredfold", if Ruskin is to be believed—should continue to persuade the world that only petty pleasures and paltry passions prevailed in the United Kingdom? No! "That nobility, deficient in the English school but not in the English character, being latent, might therefore be brought out." At any cost, whether it were or were not to the taste of English painters, if it were not in accordance with their genius or their traditions, with their eye or with their hand, England should have an heroic art. For half-a-

century she had only produced lay figures, now she was going to cover her walls with *men*, men who should typify all that was noblest in humanity. The painter might fail, but he would have shown at least that if the English are not great artists they are good citizens.

Sometimes a victory is unnecessary, but a struggle is inevitable. Watts, striving to recall to life on his canvas the mutilated marbles of Phidias, was like Lord Cardigan charging at Balaclava. It was a foolish, unheard of, hopeless attempt; success was impossible, and he knew it. But the honour of England required the attempt to be made in the sight of all nations. The general throws his men forward to their destruction on the Russian guns and bayonets; Watts paints his great mythical compositions, over which he will spend his life unsuccessfully.

For, if we turn to his work from the consideration of his ideas, we shall experience, at first, most painful surprise and profound disappointment. Amidst shades of iodine, Prussian blue and pressed grape-skins, two stem-like figures move on a narrow upright canvas. These figures float unconnectedly on a bit of nondescript landscape. The distorted lines pursue each other, trying to combine. The line of the arm is seeking a junction with the shoulder,

and the shins are in search of the thighs. Watts is said to draw with his brush and to fix his outlines in colour; it is even said that he thus transfers the figure of the model directly to his composition without any intermediate studies, in order not to be influenced for too long a time by the real forms he has under his eye.

His drawing betrays such haste. His figures are like great trees blown into strange contact by the wind. They bend and sway, and recover themselves by sudden jerks. The wind plays a great part in his canvases. He mingles clouds, grass, birds, rays of sunlight, veils, scarves, folds, floating locks, embraces, strides, stiff necks, contortions and swoons. There is no knowing where all these lines of crude colour are going, whence they come, what they mean, drawn out like skeins of wool. The outlines of M. Fantin-Latour (the French artist most like Watts) are exact by comparison. Looking at his "Orpheus and Eurydice," the "Angel of Death," "Cain," the "Fata Morgana," twisting and turning, the vigorous metaphor of the old poet recurs to mind:

> De frayeur ou de crainte
> L'âme lui bat au corps.
> (With terror or with fear,
> His soul beats in his frame.)

Under this pressure they move like automata. Suddenly, they turn half of their bodies; the trunk

turns for example, whilst the legs remain stationary in their first position. Their red, or golden hair of immoderate length hangs to the ground in floating clouds like a hair-dresser's advertisement. Their hands are busied with impossible tasks, catching a shadow or the rays of the sun. Flowers are scattered about, and yet the flesh tints are as heavy as bronze. Forged in thick layers of paint the limbs are undeveloped and displeasing. It looks as if blood had overflowed the canvas and dried upon it. As to the soft, heavy draperies, blue or grey on glowing grounds, they twist and fold, and break up, and divide into a thousand flowing channels. There is a superfluity of folds. The robes are surplices. The sleeves all pleats. The colours are all out of harmony. Sometimes the violence of one tone diminishes that of another, and a Venetian harmony is the result, but that never lasts long. The accompanying colours are so out of tune that, in spite of the beauty of the duet, the whole produces the effect of a discord, and you are ready to turn away, persuaded that there is nothing worth waiting longer to listen to.

And yet you linger, for whilst Watts' colour distracts the eye, his ideas penetrate to the depths of the soul, and slowly arouse something that was sleeping there. These myths, so laboriously brought

forth by the artist apart from all picturesque feeling, by the mere strength of his character and the single energy of his heart, we recognise with surprise are human, are of the present day, are alive. Some years ago, when I visited the South Kensington Museum for the first time, I took, by chance, the staircase leading to the Library, one of the least known and least frequented corners of the immense palace. The walls of this staircase are covered with canvases exhibited there for some years, which then disappear like goods from a shop. At that time I held the conviction, common to many, that mythological painting was a false, decadent, commonplace style; that out of such impersonal figures as Death, Justice, Time and Love, nothing more could now-a-days be made than a spiritless decoration for the ceilings of a public building or of a confectioner's shop. I then thought, like many others, that to infuse fresh life-blood, and moving, speaking feeling, into these myths, worn-out by soaring into abstractions, they must of necessity be metamorphosed into portions of contemporary life. For example, Death must be represented as a dying mother surrounded by her children, on a day in spring-time; Love by a pair of rowers confiding the secret of their happiness to the calm reflections of the islands of the Seine. I still held this opinion when I mounted the

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first steps of that staircase; by the time I had reached the last step I no longer believed that mythological painting was dead, nor, that in order to enlarge the figure of a fact to the sexless, impersonal universality of an idea, all warmth of feeling and all the drama of life must be extracted from it. What was there between these two opinions? Two pictures by Watts.

It is true that these two myths were chosen from those which lose nothing of their fascination as the world loses its sense of mystery. On one side hung "Love and Death," on the other, "Love and Life." To attract our eyes with curiosity to pictures of beings who have never existed, who merely incorporate a condition of ourselves, they must be beings whose essence we ardently desire to look into, and, if we know that it is wholly imaginary, it is enough if we also know that nothing in life is more powerful, more inevitable than these conventional beings. Science and modern criticism have put to flight many allegorical figures, and have dried up many founts of poetry. Jupiter Tonans becomes ridiculous now that he calls up the thousandfold more powerful figure of Mr. Edison in the midst of his electric batteries. Iris, the messenger of the gods, crosses the Atlantic less speedily than the quotations fly from the Exchange to New York. Time, with his

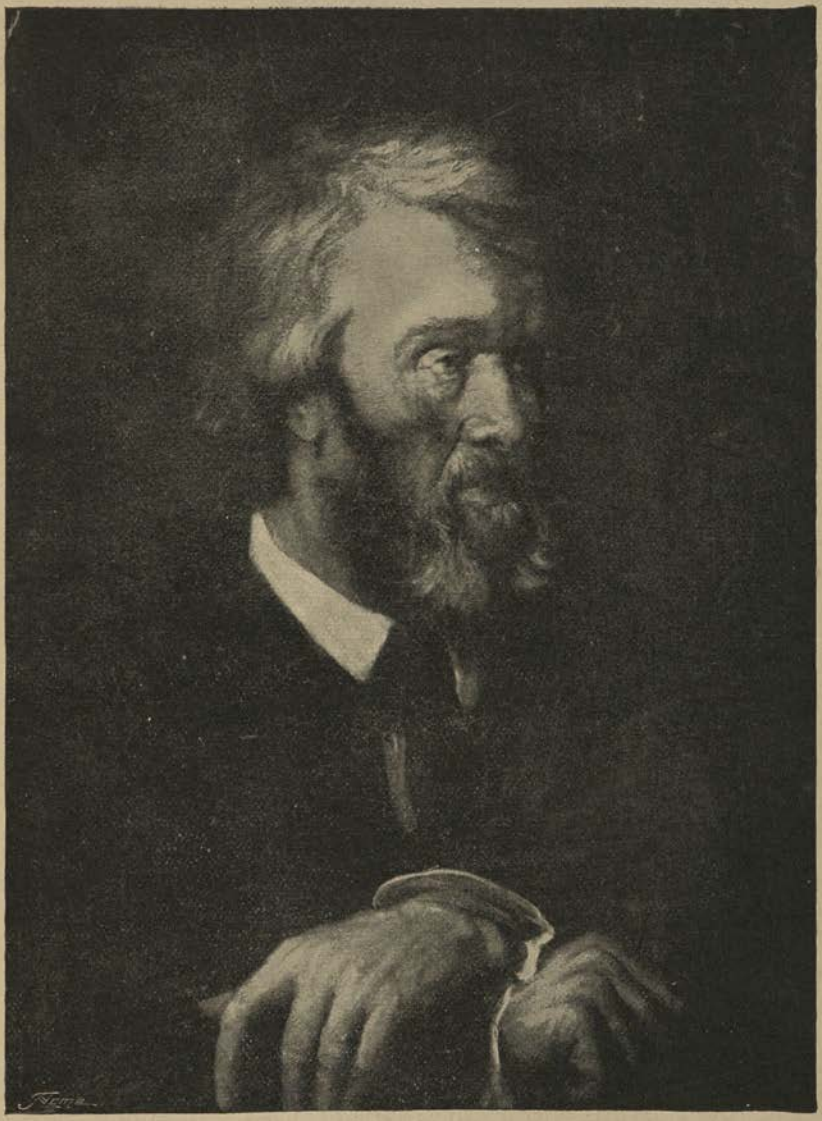
wings sweeping the ground and his hour-glass, is only fit for a picture puzzle; and chemists, in transforming agriculture, have put an alembic in place of a cornucopia in the hands of Ceres. All these ideas conjure up before us commonplace images, too well known for it to be longer possible to give them a fresh personality as a goddess or a god. But two myths have retained all their power and fascination over us, Love, and Death.

It is Death that gives its poetic value to Life as Night gives its poetic feeling to Day. Coming out of space, or drawing near to the unknown, all that is alive excites the fancy; in the twilight things inanimate seem to be alive, they reveal their most striking forms and speak their most intimate language. The most ordinary actions of life when its end is approaching, become aggrandised by the consideration of Death, the change which transforms and idealises them. Every one of us has had his hour of glorification. The commonest of grasses gives out a scent when it is cut down. So Death, in our rationalistic society which explains everything, is the last resource of poetry, because it alone remains inexplicable, and still leaves something new behind it.

The same may be said of Love. His approach reveals an unexpected strain of poetry in the most monotonous and objectless commonplace existences;

his departure leaves a reflection which gives colour even to old age. For many minds which rebel against any idea beyond, the hour when they loved was the one time when they felt universal sympathy, felt the void of selfishness, the flight of youth; the one time, in short, when they thought. So is it with Death, the most mysterious of all the powers that govern men. To men Love always appears as a god. They could not otherwise account for the suddenness of his inspirations, or the inflexibility of his power. The polyglot multitude which crowds on the slope of a hillside in Bavaria on fine summer evenings to watch Yseult drinking Brangain's philtre believes in this god as firmly as the Greek crowds who kept his festival; and the words which rise to all lips in all languages on those summer evenings as they are returning to the sleeping village are still the words of the *Vita Nuova:* ECCE DEUS . . .

Watts felt all the resources, all the life that there was in this for his abstract creations. He understood that all that was unknown was not "closed," as a famous verse of Mrs. Ackermann's declares, and that he could still embody his phantoms, in these two at least. As long as Love lasts poetry will live, even under an abstract form; as long as Death lasts religion will not die. Wishing to put new life into the myths, he chose the two grandest



THOMAS CARLYLE. G. F. WATTS, R.A.

and most attractive of them, those which science can neither explain away nor lessen to the minds of men—Love, and Death. But this choice would not have sufficed had not the master of symbolism brought a new and deep feeling to his presentation of them in default of great æsthetic qualities, and if he had not brought fresh thoughts and fresh views to these subjects, upon which everything had been already said and painted.

What is his idea of Love then? Look at his famous picture, "Love and Life." On a ridge of rock, sharply defined against the sky, stands out the figure of a young man with large wings, who is Love, climbing the steep slope which is never climbed but once. He turns to support a young girl, plaintive, resigned and weary, whom he is drawing upward—she is Life. Bent with fatigue she lays her two small hands in those of her manly guide. Her eyes are raised to his with an expression of tenderness, almost of reproach. Her half-opened mouth seems made to murmur Petrarch's lines:—

> Love who behold'st all thoughts without disguise,
> And those hard paths, where I've no other guide,
> And through this heart, which I from others hide,
> But not from thee, dost launch thy roving eyes.
> Thou know'st what hereunto I sacrifice
> To follow thee; yet dost thou daily stride
> From hill to hill, and me, that tired abide

On path so steep, thou dost not recognise.
Afar, no doubt, my sweetest light I see,
Where to rough ways by thee I'm spurred and bent,
But then I have no wings to match thy flight.
Full fairly satisfied my will could be,
Might she be with my sighs not discontent,
And might I die—through zeal bestowed aright. *

CAYLEY.

This Love, who raises, consoles, supports, enlightens Life, is not that fatal and malicious Eros whose psychology is described by M. Paul Bourget, his adventures by M. Ohnet, and his crimes by M. Zola. Let us clearly understand that he is not that son of Venus whom Anacreon led by the hand to Theocritus, and Theocritus guided to Ovid, who was introduced by Ovid to Jean de Meung, and by Jean de Meung to Tasso in the fragrant paths of Armida's garden, strewn with the dust of happy knights. He is rather devoted Love, whatever the form his manifestation may take; filial or fraternal, compassionate or social. Let us enlarge the limits of this vision. Let there pass over it the breath of the universal hopes of the heart-breaking pauperism of this metropolis of six million souls, which cannot be forgotten even in the depths of this museum, any more than the ocean can be ignored even in a shuttered house upon its shores.

We see another Love then in this figure of Watts,

* Sonnet 112. *Amor che vedi ogni pensiero aperto.*

a thousand times grander and more comforting, which comes to greet all lives that flag and faint by the way, and to help them up the rugged height. We will keep for this figure the name of Charity, though it changes its name from Philanthropy to Altruism with every variation of human thought. It gives itself up wholly and entirely to be a companion for all time, not like Eros merely for a season; it is not a guide for one journey only, but for a lifetime.

Now, what is his conception of Death? To gain some idea of it, not a philosophical, but an artistic idea, you should read a page from the "Commentaires d'un Soldat" by M. Paul de Molènes, relating to the Crimean War, where he describes the impression made upon him by the horrors of the cholera at Varna.

"At night," he says, "when I was sleeping in my tent, or when I awoke suddenly, I always heard a ceaseless noise, that of heavy waggons moving towards the cemetery; the day was devoted to single funerals; those of the hecatombs were kept back for night. I knew the neighbouring cemetery, for more than one sad ceremony had summoned me thither. When I heard, in the darkness, the sound of those funeral carts, I recalled the long line of trenches dug the night before for the dead on the morrow. Well, I can truly say that I have

seldom enjoyed more peaceful slumbers than on the edge of the road in this bivouac by the Black Sea. Death is only horrible in reality when it is looked at askance, from afar, and at long intervals; but when our fate drives us towards it, when we come, as it were, to sleep upon its breast, then we find it a tender nurse."

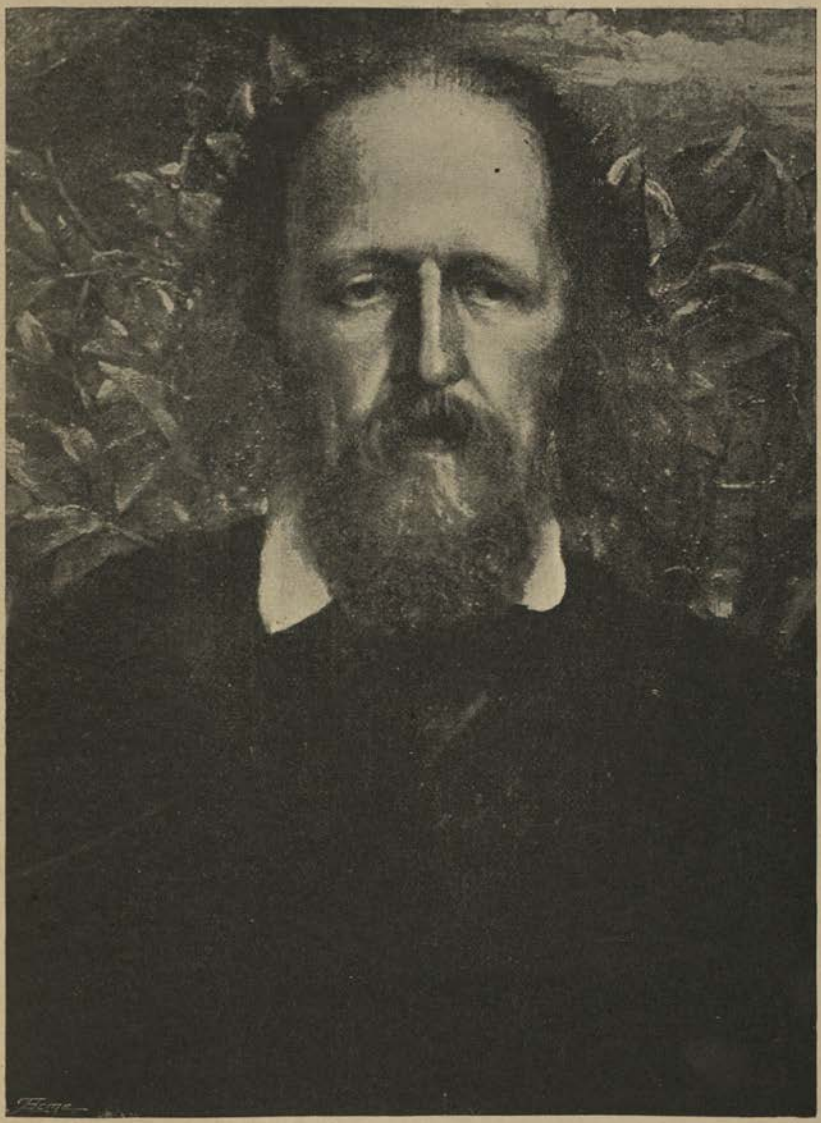
Such is Death as Watts has painted it. He himself calls it, "the kind nurse who comes to put the children to bed." He has placed it on a throne made of fragments, between two colossal angels who stand upright, drooping their heads, ready to fall asleep. To the foot of the throne comes everyone in turn to bow and offer homage. This is called the "Court of Death"; it was painted, the catalogue says, for a cemetery of the poor. Strange courtiers are there, bringing all they possess to exchange for a little rest. The king lays down his crown as if he were divesting himself of a talisman, which bestows the sad privilege of better discerning the meanness of mankind. The knight lays down his sword, for the monsters that he kills always spring up again. A cripple drags along on his crutch, which he will leave as an offering to the queen who sets him free from all suffering. A maiden, leaning lovingly on the goddess, is asleep in the folds of her robe. It recalls "Friend Death" of the old German engrav-

ing; you could fancy you hear the melody of the guitars which in Chili welcome the death of a child. If you look into the large hands of Death you see a tiny figure, a new-born babe, which she seems to be nursing and watching for a fresh existence. All these figures are grave, but not one is affrighted; the maiden looks happy. Those who believe in life, who still hope something from it, who are not willing to depart before they have accomplished some task they imagine to be useful, or have tasted some fresh pleasure, do not appear amongst the courtiers of this eternal Versailles. But those who have felt the hopes on which they leaned as supports of iron break like reeds; or, who have found limits to the affections they believed to be infinite; or have stepped on to the hills which looked so beautiful to them in the distance, to discover that they were but mounds of earth such as the plain they had left; all these gather softly round the queen without a sign of regret. This is what gives its significance, its unspeakable melancholy to this great picture, this enormous canvas, which is hardly sketched in and only half coloured.

If Watts had merely shown the miserable amongst the courtiers of Death, the infirm, the outcast, such as Ary Scheffer pictures holding out their manacled hands to Christ the Consoler; or the halt, the lame,

the lepers, such as are appealing to the mower in the Campo Santo at Pisa, he would not have made such a novel and sorrowful impression. What sadness is there in seeing prisoners welcome their deliverer? But that a king in all his might, a knight in the fulness of his youth, that the happy and the conquerors of this world should resign themselves to quit their triumphs and renounce their happiness; this is the saddest of human sights, because it best shows the contrariety of human affairs. As long as life refuses us what we think she possesses no grief is incurable; we may groan and lament, but we resist, for we believe, or we may believe, that our happiness lies in what fate has obstinately denied us. But when life has shown us all that she holds, and we see that she holds nothing; when passing years have betrayed to us the secret of fate, and we feel that there is no secret, and the lips of the sphinx are closed upon nothing, then that is worse than despair and we are truly ready to die.

So Watts is the painter of Love and Death, but not of hateful or ridiculous death, of the skeleton let out of an anatomical cabinet who heads the Dance of Death, or who is kept as a prisoner in an orange tree by the wizard of popular legend. Not of that braggart and tricksy Love, the urchin made to be whipped, who plays tricks on Thor-



ALFRED, FIRST LORD TENNYSON. G. F. WATTS, R.A.

waldsen's nymphs, or pricks M. Bouguereau's young shepherds with paper arrows. His Love is manly and his Death benevolent. The former sustains life, and the latter heals it. His winged god is the powerful god who makes hearts beat ready for sacrifice; his veiled goddess is the watchful mother who lulls the bodies of her children to rest. We go to him when we would renew the struggle, because he is the light of troubled minds and the support of wavering wills. We turn to her when having experienced the wounds of defeat, or, what is worse, the emptiness of victory, we resign ourselves to taste the peace and quietness of a day without a morrow.

And when the aged artist, inspired by a touch of genius, represents this Love and this Death great as he has conceived them, beautiful as he has made them, such as he has revived them, then he reaches the climax of his work and of his thought. The little Love, who fights like a sentinel, who braces himself, who refuses manfully to let the gloomy visitor pass him by, is noble and great; he is satisfied that life is a boon to him whom he is protecting; he would preserve it for him, he does his duty. But great and noble is this phantom also, which advances so calmly, and which seems to say to the courageous child—"You know not what you are

doing. You have accompanied and supported him in rugged paths; I will lead him to the kingdom where there is no more weariness. Your part is done, let me accomplish mine. You can do less for him than I can. You dazzle, but I enlighten; you guide, but I gather in; you console, but I cure."

One day Michael Angelo met Raphael with his pupils in a Roman garden, and the old man jested with the younger, saying, "You go about surrounded with people, as if you were at the head of an army." "And you," replied Sanzio, "go about alone—like the executioner."

This saying might be applied to Watts also; to his art which no man follows, to the awe he inspires, to the profound impression he makes on the imagination. Thinking over all the artists who work in England, it is Watts, the gloomiest of them, who makes a mark on the memory. He has painted nothing to amuse us. He has been the executioner of all dreams of joy, of all illusions, of all fresh, graceful forms, of all delicate shades, of all pleasure. Sanson, who cut off so many pretty heads, cannot have terrified the survivors of Thermidor more. Looking at him, as looking at the executioner, we think of the last hour, not only of criminals, but of all mankind, of the only inevitable picture of our

life, of what we shall be then, and above all, of what we would have been.*

* The Works of G. F. Watts, R.A. Pall Mall Gazette, extra number 22.—*H. Quilter*, The Art of Watts.—*Mrs. Barrington*, Catalogue of paintings by G. F. Watts, R.A., on exhibition at the Museum of Art, New York.—*Julia Cartwright*, G. F. Watts. R.A.—*L. T. Meade*, The Painter of Eternal Truths.—*J. Ruskin*, Art of England. The Mythic Schools, G. F. Watts.

# CHAPTER II

## CHRISTIAN ART.—HOLMAN HUNT

AMONGST the numerous visitors to the Champ de Mars in 1894, who crowded round M. Tissot's "Life of Christ," admiring the prolonged effort and the religious thought which had given birth to these pictures, very few probably bestowed a thought on the creator of this style of production, on the energetic painter who, forty years ago, opened up the way which Bida, Munkacsy, and Vereschagine have since pursued,—on Holman Hunt. In 1854 the young pre-Raphaelite had gained a universal suffrage for his "Light of the World," and had found himself at that point in the life of a lucky beginner when he has won the victory, and has only to turn it to good account. His path in life was clearly marked out. To fix his name—already famous—in the memory of of the public he must go on producing pictures; pictures like those which had brought him success, that they might be the more easily disposed of to picture dealers and rich amateurs. Holman Hunt did neither the one nor the other. He told his

friends that he was going to the Holy Land, to bury himself in the desert, and that it would be many years before he signed another picture. He was then seven and twenty; his friends and patrons looked upon it as a suicide. They did all they could to dissuade him, they quoted all manner of warnings, but Hunt remained unmoved. I will not, he replied, go on repeating the same formula, the same subject, the same sentiment. Art needs air and space, and a revival of inspiration. He added that he had long dreamed of painting the greatest of all histories, that of Christ; and to paint it so as to touch critical modern minds it must be represented as it happened—in all humility, localised and humanised, not in pomp and idealised, as it has been by the traditions of the Renaissance; and to do this it must be studied on the spot. He believed that strict truth would be eloquent enough in itself; that the sight of what the Nazarene suffered would move living souls without the angels and halos and Corinthian columns and baldachinos, and all the idolatrous fantasies of the Italian masters.

He set out, and this trait alone would show us what Holman Hunt was and what he wished to be. Philosophic and vague moralist as he was, like Watts, his art is restricted within the limits of Christianity; at the same time his outlines are firm, his gestures

well marked, his distances clear, his details definite. As to ideas, you seem to pass from the hopes of a spiritualist to the convictions of a believer, and the eye seems to have found the right focus of a lens.

In this impersonal, sexless figure, rising up to heaven with children wrapped in the folds of his cloak, when defined and enveloped in light, and crowned with thorns, we recognise Christ. Those infants whom we saw embraced by death and wondered what would become of them, we find encircled with a halo, gambolling around the infant Christ, with roses and palms in their hands, and we perceive that they are the Holy Innocents. "You know," Hunt wrote to a friend from Jerusalem, "how above all my life affections is my love of Christ."

His faith is great and kindly, open to all sorts of arguments, but immovable. From his very youth, in the shop where he laid aside his debit and credit accounts to paint flies, which the office boy persistently tried to flick off the window, he read Voltaire and Volney, Byron and Shelley. After that he was connected with the Positivists, and discussed with them in long conversations the problems of the future of humanity. Then, in his various journeys in Palestine, he took with him the works of Strauss and Renan; he read them exhaustively, he pondered over them in his little Arab house at night, when the

THE FINDING OF OUR SAVIOUR IN THE TEMPLE.
W. HOLMAN HUNT.
*By permission of the Corporation of Birmingham.*

neighbouring height of Golgotha was wrapped in shadow; but the more he studied the adversaries of his faith, the happier and the more firmly-rooted he felt himself in it. Every blow aimed at his belief drove it the deeper into his heart. "Perhaps with less opportunity of knowing the real history," he said, "the Parisian sentimental travesty of the Gospels by Renan, or the romance by Strauss, suiting the modern intellect, would impress me with some of the respect which so many men have for them." Thus, an attempt had been made to explain a certain apparition by the effects of mist on certain mountains. Hunt went to see these mountains, he observed them long and keenly, and perpetuated them with the point of his brush at all hours and at all seasons, and the testimony of the landscape painter has, in his case, confirmed the convictions of the believer.

After some years of careful study on the spot, he dispelled, once and for all, many doubts which he had been inclined to admit before he left England. His London friends were shocked and startled, but he answered them deliberately: "No doubt there are errors and obscurities in the prophets, but what do they matter? I can, without loss of reverence, allow that the children to whom the Father's messages were given, did use their own faltering lispings, and express themselves with the light of their own

age alone; but I recognise through all a divine charge, a father's adjuration to faith and trust. Brothers and sisters accept the parent's authority, they learn that he is at hand, though the infant lips spoke the word in their own prattling manner."

The artist speaks thus in his "Memoirs," and by advancing into the demesne of exegesis and theology he does not consider that he deserts that of æsthetics. In explaining what is in the depths of his heart, he tells us what comes to the point of his brush; for Mr. Hunt is conscience turned artist. He only paints what he believes, and because he believes in Christ, he, alone almost in England, has painted Christian art. If his subjects are strictly Christian, they avoid the usual attributes thereof. They would cause stupefaction, and perhaps scandal in the souls of the patrons of that pious style of painting which, as an artist has said, represents the agonies of art rather than those of the Saviour. His most famous pictures represent scenes which he alone has painted, because he alone has conceived them. Christ with a lantern, knocking at a door at night; the hireling shepherd, showing a butterfly to his companion instead of guarding his sheep from poisonous herbs and from the jaws of the wolf; the goat sinking in the shores of the Dead Sea; the Virgin perceiving the shadow of the cross on the wall; the Innocents accompany-

ing the flight into Egypt. These are subjects for which many more justifications could be found in the sacred books, than there are examples in museum catalogues. There are, indeed, some German engravings of "Behold! I stand at the door and knock"; but the "Shadow of Death," and the "Triumph of the Innocents," have never existed but in Hunt's work.

For example, the Christ in the "Shadow of Death" is a workman. No doubt, before Holman Hunt, Christ had been represented as a child in the house of the carpenter, but never at work there; or, if at work, only for amusement, as a child of rich parents makes buildings of cardboard, or as Louis XVI laid aside his supremacy to hammer iron, not as an apprentice devoted to his task. Sometimes the amusement had sad results—the Child wounded his hands, as in Millais' picture; or, playing with two bits of wood he made them into the instrument of his future sufferings. But never, or hardly ever, had Christ before been represented as an artisan of thirty, handling the auger and the saw to gain his livelihood, in the dust and stifling heat of a work-shed. This is what Holman Hunt painted. His Christ is almost naked, His loins girt with an Oriental scarf, over which falls His loosened tunic. He has been bending for a long time over His saw, and is drawing Himself

up to His full height, inhaling a deep draught of the evening air, and stretching out His arms to relax the muscles. The light falling full on His breast, casts His flat shadow behind Him on the white wall, where are hanging in a line above His head some tools on a horizontal board. This shadow of the nude body, with arms upraised to catch hold of a cross-way beam, which also makes a mark on the wall, gives exactly the idea of a man hanging on a cross. Looked at more closely the illusion is even stronger, for the files and screws are placed on the spot on the wall where the clenched hands are reflected. A saw rises like a trophy above the head, and the end of a curved tool encircles it like a crown. Scratches on the wall run down the shadow like drops of blood. Between Christ and the shadow, the Virgin, clad in Oriental costume, is kneeling on one knee, with her back turned to us, opening a treasured coffer in which she had laid by long ago the gifts of the Magi—Caspar's crown, and Melchior's incense-burner and Balthasar's myrrh. She has seen the prophetic shadow on the wall, and her body thrown back, crouching to the ground, expresses her alarm. But it is nothing. In a moment the arms of the Galilean will have dropped to resume their work, the coffer will be closed upon the past, the setting sun will have dispersed the

shadows, and in the quiet workshop at Nazareth there will only be heard the grinding of the saw as it finishes cutting up the plank shaped by God. Perhaps there may be a tear in the eyes of the mother, and this passing apparition may be one of those things which, the Gospel tells us, she "pondered in her heart."

This is a purely realistic picture. Certainly there is a cast shadow in it which adapts itself marvellously to the inward thought, but it is, or it may be, strictly accurate. On this point we should try in vain to convict the painter of a fault. The effect is bold, connected, homogeneous, and with a precision in the details which often suggests a photograph. Moreover, there is no ideal element of sanctity; not a thread of gold, not a cloud, not a halo. But the artist has induced nature to assist in the mystic meaning of his work without breaking its laws. Thus there is a double-arched window behind the figure of Christ. Through one of the openings is seen part of an olive tree, then the hills of Nazareth, and the plain of Jezreel. The head of Christ is contained in the other arch; so that the distant, glowing sky, seen in the semicircle of the stone, sheds a natural halo. We can see the light of God, where the mother only sees the shadow of His suffering.

The "Triumph of the Innocents" (also called the "Flight into Egypt") is purely mystical. It is not a hideous massacre, an infant butchery, such as the Flemish painters represent it, often only as an excuse for showing off plump calves, chubby cheeks and dimpled hands, all splashed with blood—the fresh blood of the little creatures snatched from the breast. Nor is it the idealised, leisurely flight, represented by the Renascents, that quiet progress betwixt earth and heaven, with angels fluttering their wings like sails in a breeze. In this the Holy Family really is in flight. Joseph, with a turban, his legs bare, a satchel on his back with his tools, and the shoes he has taken off to enable him to walk more quickly, strides along, tugging at the halter of the ass, which bears not only the Virgin and Child, but all kinds of provisions and a flask. Joseph is turning his head towards the hills of Bethlehem in the background, whereon are shining through the night the signals of Herod's soldiers in pursuit of the fugitives. He only seems to feel alarm. The Mother, seated upon the ass, looks happy, and the Child smiles as He points with His little hand to—What? A very strange sight! Around, in front of, and behind them, like the children's guard of honour raised for baby kings, a crowd of children, of the same age as the infant Jesus, are running along,

gambolling, waving palms, lilies and branches. One of them is burning incense. Almost all are garlanded with roses; they have caps on their heads, and wear short floating garments. They are all dabbling delightfully as they cross a brook. The procession is raising great air-bubbles from the water, and a blue supernatural light, which encircles their heads, and girdles their shoulders, and outlines their hands and feet, terrifies the watch-dogs at a windmill seen far off in the fields; they turn aside, and seem to be barking madly.

What are these little ones? Cherubs, or little loves, such as Altdorfer has introduced, very indecently, into a "Repose during the Flight into Egypt," in the Berlin Museum, where they are grovelling in a Renaissance fountain, to amuse the infant Christ, who is giving them grapes? No! these are little Bethlehemites, the companions of the infant God, who were but yesterday playing before his door, full of joy and health, opening wide upon life those large, serious, astonished eyes of little children, which make them look like the explorers of an unknown world. To-day the knives of Herod's soldiery have cut them off from the world. But they have entered the kingdom of Heaven. Their hard journey is over; quite over for those who march in front, burning incense, holding palms; they are angels. The second

group, around the ass, are less conscious of their divine duties; they are amusing themselves. One of them, as he walks along with his head upon his breast, is examining the rent made in his little garment by the sword that slew him, and is surprised, perhaps, not to find a wound on his glorified body. It is an insoluble problem for the infant logician, and one which old theologians, indeed, might be much troubled to explain. A third group is composed of three little ones who have come from Bethlehem, hovering in the air, and have not yet joined the triumphant throng. They are weeping, and rub their little eyes with their fat fists, as if they were still in pain from the stroke which sent them to a blessed eternity, as if they felt that the soldier had hurt them cruelly. One of them, who is clinging to the neck of his companion, seems to be not fully awakened from the torpor of death: a halo, such as crowns the rest, is floating at some distance, not yet affixed to his head. There is nothing more pathetic in all religious art than this trio of baby martyrs. And to make it evident that this is no nursery scene, one of the enormous air-bubbles rising from the water, before it disperses into air, displays in its prismatic reflections Jacob's Dream, the Tree of Life, and the Worship of the Heavens, as the most natural thing in the world.

"TWO GENTLEMAN OF VERONA." W. HOLMAN HUNT.

The strong faith which has inspired his work as a whole, influences Mr. Hunt even in the details of his accessories, his manner and his method. If he paints only what he believes he paints it as he believes, boldly and with no evasion, with the minuteness of an entomologist giving a description, and the scruples of a devotee making a confession. He would not represent "Voices" as Bastien le Page does, under the form of those boneless, vaporous phantoms amongst trees and vegetables, which as a Christian you may believe to be saints from heaven, if you wish; but if, as a rationalist, you like to believe they are an optical illusion, produced by fasting and sunlight in this dazzling valley of colour, you may do so just as readily. With Hunt there is no choice possible between an angel and a mist. His sharply drawn, carefully modelled angels have an objective reality which compels you either to belief or to denial. This is the vigorous application of Ruskin's proud precept that "the primary virtue (of pre-Raphaelitism) is the trying to conceive things as they are, and thinking and feeling them out; believing joyfully if we may, doubting bravely if we must, but never mystifying, or shrinking from, or choosing for argument's sake, this or that fact. The persons may be spiritual, but they are individual—St. George himself, not the vague idea of fortitude;

St. Cecilia herself, not the mere power of music. And, although spiritual, there is no attempt whatever made by this school to indicate their immortal nature by any evanescence or obscurity of aspect. All transparent ghosts and the outlined spectres are the work of failing imagination, rest you sure of that. Botticelli, indeed, paints the Favonian breeze transparent, but never the angel Gabriel."

This constant seeking after the definite, this hatred of careless painting, which, as Delacroix says, is cowardly painting *(peinture d'un lâche)*, leads Hunt to overload his foregrounds, his draperies, his accessories, and even his modelling, with useless details. His "Innocents" are chiselled rather than painted. In his "Christ in the Shadow of Death" the myology is exaggerated, the muscles start out as if He were flayed, the veins are swollen as if He were in a fit; whilst the artist's efforts to obtain a strongly individualised attitude have led him to contort the body and limbs of his subject.

It might be replied that in this abnormal and momentary attitude certain unusual effects strike the eye; for example, that the uplifted arm disclosed the hollow of the armpit and seemed to divide the muscular covering, so that the two edges of the tissue seemed to project, the axillary edge of the great pectoral in front, and of the great dorsal at

the back, which are apparently united by the arm when at rest. It might also be urged that the instinctive movement made by a workman whose muscles are fatigued by long bending down, is exactly to reverse the position which caused this fatigue; he throws his chest back and draws up his legs, taking an abnormal position to counteract the normal tension of his overstrained muscles. That is true, for the Christ here is plainly relaxing himself by stretching up his arms, not in prayer, as Archdeacon Farrar would have it, for then his position would not be justified. But however exact it may be in detail, the muscular anatomy of the Christ is overdone, precisely because it is too exact, or at least too much in detail. It is a figure for a study, not for a picture.

Mr. Hunt's conscience tells not merely on his pencilling. It governs his smallest accessories. This figure of Christ in his work-shed is taken from a man of Bethlehem, because there is a tradition that the inhabitants of this village have retained some features of the House of David. The workshop is that of a carpenter's at Nazareth. The landscape, seen through the window, is taken from nature, from the village where Jesus lived. In the corner there is a green earthenware pitcher holding water, and aromatic herbs to keep the water fresh; this pitcher

is Nazarene, so are the gimlet, the auger, the plumb-line, the punch, the square, and the saw. The landscape of his "Flight into Egypt" is a view taken on the Gaza road, thirty miles from Bethlehem and ten from the Egyptian frontier. The ass that carries the Virgin is a fine specimen of the famous Mecca race, supposed to be descendants of Mahomet's steed. When he paints "Christ among the Doctors," these doctors are not sweetmeat merchants of the seraglio, but Jews of note carefully chosen, and each representing a definite historical type—Simeon, son of Hillel, a kind of Hercules; Bava ben Butah, whose eyes were torn out by order of Herod; Johanan ben Zakkia, the author of the Parables; Jonathan ben Uzziel, the author of the Targum; Zadok the disciple of Judas the Gaulonite, wearing a phylactery on his forehead; Dosithai, the antagonist of Herod, and the Rabbi of Jamnia; all in original costumes of the same material and the same colour as those worn by their descendants of the highest rank. To obtain such exactness Holman Hunt had incredible obstacles to overcome. When he began his long career in 1854, the Jews refused to sit to the Christian painter. The rabbis, fearing that the portraits might be consecrated or baptized, published an excommunication on all who should enter his house. Driven out of Jerusalem, Hunt withdrew to the shore of the

Dead Sea, taking with him a poor goat, whom he set up as a model on the salt shore, and there, under the burning sun reflected from this leaden lake, in a country infested by wild beasts and robbers of all kinds, the painter of the Gospel, with a gun in one hand and a brush in the other, spent long delicious hours, producing his "Scapegoat".

It was the time of the Crimean War. Ruskin says: "While the heights of the Crimea were white with tents of war, and the fiercest passion of the nations of Europe burned in high funereal flame over their innumerable dead, one peaceful English tent was pitched beside a sleepless sea, and the whole strength of an English heart spent in painting a weary goat, dying upon the salt sand. The neighbourhood is stagnant and pestiferous, polluted by the decaying vegetables brought down by the Jordan in its floods; the bones of the beasts of burden that have died by 'the way of the sea,' lie like wrecks upon its edge, bared by the vultures and bleached by the salt ooze. And here the young English painter sets his easel upon the actual shore; pursues his work with patience through months of solitude, and paints crag by crag the purple mountains of Moab, and grain by grain the pale ashes of Gomorrah."

Patience is Hunt's great quality. His "Triumph

of the Innocents" cost him no less than ten years' work, constantly interrupted by accidents, by loss of properties, by illness. Nothing less than his belief in his mission could have supported him through these prolonged trials. A recital of his tribulations sounds like one of those mediæval legends in which the devil, to revenge himself on some brother who has painted him on a fresco in too hideous colours, pushes him off the scaffolding; and the holy man must have perished if the Virgin (also painted on the wall) had not held her hand out to him. Holman Hunt ended by believing that it really was the Devil who opposed him. In a letter, dated from Warwick-gardens, Kensington, January 5th, 1880, he tells how the struggle ended:

"I was, on Christmas Day, induced to go and work at the studio, because I had prepared a new plan of curing the twisted surface. When I arrived it was so dark that it was possible to do nothing, except with a candle held in my hand along with the palette. I laboured thus from about eleven. On getting to work I noticed the unusual quietness of the whole establishment, and I accounted for it by the fact that all other artists were with their families and friends. I alone was there at the group of studios because of the terrible and doubtful struggle with the devil, which, one year before, had brought

me to the very portals of death; indeed almost, I may say, beyond these during my delirium. Many days and nights too, till past midnight at times, in my large, dark studio in Jerusalem had I stood with a candle, hoping to surmount the evil each hour, and the next day I had found all had fallen into disorder again, as though I had been vainly striving against destiny. The plan I was trying this Christmas morning I have never thought of before the current week, but it might be that even this also would fail. As I groaned over the thought of my pains, which were interwoven with my calculations of the result of the coming work on my fresh preparation of the ground, I gradually saw reason to think that it promised better, and I bent all my energies to advance my work to see what the later crucial touches would do. I hung back to look at my picture; I felt assured that I should succeed. I said to myself, half aloud, 'I think I have beaten the devil!' and stepped down, when the whole building shook with a convulsion, seemingly immediately behind my easel, as if a great creature were shaking itself and running between me and the door. I called out 'What is it?' But there was no answer, and the noise ceased. I then looked about, it was then between half-past one and two, and perfectly like night, only darker; for ordinarily the lamps in

the square show themselves after sunset, and on this occasion the fog hid everything." Henceforward, from this strange Christmas, better days were to dawn for the artist. The "Triumph of the Innocents" was at last completed on a fresh canvas: perhaps the devil left his mark on the colouring which is Hunt's weakest point, but the composition is extremely harmonious and the drawing exquisite in its delicacy.

To rest from the struggles in which he has passed his life Holman Hunt has reverted to the legends which delighted him in youth. Thirty-seven years ago he sketched the picture which is now on his easel, "The Lady of Shalott." This subject is as dear still to the English as on the day when Tennyson put it into verse, for quite recently, at the Royal Academy, Mr. Waterhouse exhibited a "Lady of Shalott." Anyone who has read Tennyson knows the story. Near the fortress of Camelot, the abode of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, Lancelot, Gawaine, and the rest, higher up the river, is a little island lying amongst the lilies, which bears the name of Shalott. A lovely, gracious lady lives there, cloistered in her tower—

> There she weaves by night and day,
> A magic web with colours gay,
> She has heard a whisper say,
> A curse is on her if she stay

To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The lady of Shalott.

And moving through a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees a highway near,
Winding down to Camelot.
There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls
Pass onward from Shalott.

The lady has no lover, and her sole pleasure is the weaving into her tapestry all that she sees reflected in her mirror. But one day a handsome knight, Sir Lancelot, rides by, singing "Tirra lirra," and the lady can restrain herself no longer.

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces through the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She looked down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror crack'd from side to side;
"The curse is come upon me," cried
The lady of Shalott.

Then the poem goes on to tell of her melancholy death in a boat which floats down the stream under the walls of Camelot.

Such is the last work into which Holman Hunt has put his heart. Opposite to it is the "Triumph

of the Innocents," and here and there studies made at Jerusalem and at Bethlehem. The career he began there under the thin shadow of time-worn olives is being carried out here in London, in a house the painter has built, amongst old friends, admirers of Keats and King Arthur. The old artist works happily between legend and belief, between the Lady of Shalott and Our Lady, for he looks upon the two grand desires of his life as accomplished; pre-Raphaelitism has conquered, and Christ has risen again. He expects nothing more—neither a baronetcy, nor his election to the Royal Academy. He does not give grand receptions like fashionable painters, nor does he see interviewers gathering at his door. He has other and deeper joys. Some years ago he received a letter from his old friend, W. Bell Scott, telling him that in a remote parish of Ayrshire, where he was living, he had heard a picture of Hunt's spoken of under very curious circumstances. Once a year the minister there preaches in the open air, in the graveyard surrounding the ruins of an ancient church. Chairs are brought for any persons of importance, and the rest of the congregation—old farmers and shepherds, with their dogs and their daughters—sit or stand in groups on the grass or on the tombs. It was in the evening, and the sun, setting behind the hills

of Arran, cast a warm light on the ruined walls behind the preacher. He took for his text these words: "Behold! I stand at the door and knock"; and followed them by a minute description of the "Light of the World." Nothing in Hunt's symbolism had escaped him, and his whole discourse was listened to breathlessly by the silent crowd. Scott, though an unbeliever himself, was touched by the scene, and described it at once to the painter.

For such a man as Holman Hunt, this is his reward. To know that the work on which he spent his time, his strength, his thought, in a word, his life, has not only produced a thousand a year to the speculator who bought it, but has also sunk deeply enough into men's souls, for the Ayrshire shepherds, thirty years later, to remember it, and be comforted by it; to feel that the figure he created has not remained under a glass case for the luxurious use of one rich man, not to be touched, but has passed into the very life of the humblest of the people—this is worth all the glory in the world, and surpasses it all. And Holman Hunt is happy, because he has conscientiously put his beliefs to the proof of doubt, and they have resisted it. He has done like the Lady of Shalott; he has looked towards Camelot, but he has not met her terrible fate. None of the webs he paints so lovingly have been rent, nor

is the mirror broken in which the world is reflected to him. And since he has looked at the forbidden castle, at the negation of all his beliefs, his hopes, and his affections, he works with all the greater vigour, with the smile of the few who have looked closely into what they loved, and have loved what they behold there. *

* *H. Hunt.* "The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood: a Fight for Art." Contemporary Review, May, June, July 1886.

Chambers' Encyclopædia—*W. Bell Scott.* "Letters from Holman Hunt: Autobiographical Notes." London 1892.

*H. Quilter.* "H. Hunt; Preferences in Art." 1892.

*Archdeacon Farrar* and *Mrs. Meynell.* "W. H. Hunt: His life and work." Art Annual 1893.

*J. Ruskin.* Works.

# CHAPTER III

## ACADEMIC ART.—SIR F. LEIGHTON, P.R.A.

SIR FREDERICK LEIGHTON was not only the official representative of English painting on the Continent, he was virtually the representative of Continental painting in England. There is no greater, or less insular master of painting than he, across the Channel. President of the Royal Academy, decorator of the National Museum at Kensington, Director of the official schools, speech-maker at the distribution of their prizes, this Englishman of good birth and great talent would appear, at first sight, to have been in his great works a second Overbeck and in his easel pictures an earlier Bouguereau. He visited all countries and schools, learned all languages, reproduced all styles and attempted almost every art. At an age when our future artists are filling their students' manuals with caricatures, he had already studied at Rome, at Dresden, at Berlin, at Frankfort, at Florence, running through Europe and through æstheticism; before he had time and taste for discrimination and decision. Later, he visited the ruins of the

Coliseum with Robert Browning, the Banks of the Nile with M. de Lesseps, old German castles with Steinle, Paris salons with Decamps and Ary Scheffer; working everywhere, imbibing sunshine at Damascus and fog at Frankfort, painting dreary seas in Ireland, and rocks in the valley of Jehoshaphat, orange trees in Andalusia, and olive trees in Italy; filling his trunks and his imagination with all he could see of the best, the most beautiful, the purest. When he returned to London, in his prime, he displayed all his acquisitions. His sumptuous dwelling in Holland Park-road was the Temple of Eclecticism. Beside a dancing fountain in the centre of an Arab court stood Greek vases in red and black, and casts from the Parthenon; Persian majolica alternated with old Arab chairs encrusted with mirrors, and here and there a Florentine bronze or a stuffed peacock. Statues met you at every turn, until you doubted whether you were at a sculptor's or a painter's. Sir F. Leighton exhibited some large statues—the "Athlete struggling with a Python"; the "Sluggard stretching himself"; and he constantly modelled statuettes, the better to study the effects of foreshortening which he introduced in his pictures. He admired very varied styles of art; there were portraits by Tintoretto and landscapes by Corot, in places of honour; studies by Reynolds and sketches by Delacroix; "A Nymph"

by Watts, and drawings by Steinle, an "Iris" by Paris Bordone, and a "Flagellation" by Sebastian del Piombo; then, all at once, an inscription from the Koran. It was a Pantheon with altars to all forms of art, to all the gods of æstheticism, and you looked involuntarily for an empty altar dedicated to "the unknown God."

At first sight the master was like his house. Of facile genius, and pleasing disposition, he assimilated everything and was accessible to the æsthetic. He was a model President. A finished man of the world, he knew how to combine in harmony, around him and in his work, many different and even contradictory ideas, with that breadth of mind that others only attain by their complete indifference to matters of art. But let us examine more deeply his ideas and his style. Passing over his "Odalisque with a Swan" and "Love feeding the Doves," which might well be attributed to M. Bouguereau, and the semi-circular frescoes in the Kensington Museum, "The Arts of War" and "The Arts of Peace," let us take his work as a whole, and compare it with French work; then all that is British in Sir F. Leighton, though well concealed by his eclecticism, will appear. First of all, what Frenchman of our day would choose from the Gospels the purely psychological subject of the Wise and Foolish Virgins. Which of them, thinking of a

subject for the decoration of the Pantheon, would choose, as he has done for a medallion in St. Paul's, this text of the Apocalypse, "And the Sea gave up her Dead." And his discoveries in mythology are quite as unexpected. What modern Frenchman would dream of representing "Hercules struggling with Death for the body of Alcestis," or "Cymon's first sight of Iphigenia asleep by a fountain."

His arrangement of figures and draperies, if they have not the same originality as with Burne-Jones, Rossetti, or Madox Brown, are still very far from that of the usual painter's model. The group of "Foolish Virgins" in the fresco at Lyndhurst Church presents a fixed similarity in the expressions and parallel lines in the folds, such as are rarely found in the French school. It is the same with the "Sons of Rizpah." When Sir F. Leighton attacked parallel lines he did so with infinite taste and boldness. In his "Electra" the folds of the calyptra fall straight from the head to the feet, near a Doric column, with straight flutings, and in front of an upright laurel. Since we are considering folds it may be said at once that they give Sir F. Leighton's academic figures, his "Andromeda," his "Captive Andromache," his "Hesperides," their distinctive British character.

His nude female figures are French; draped, they

"GOLDEN HOURS."

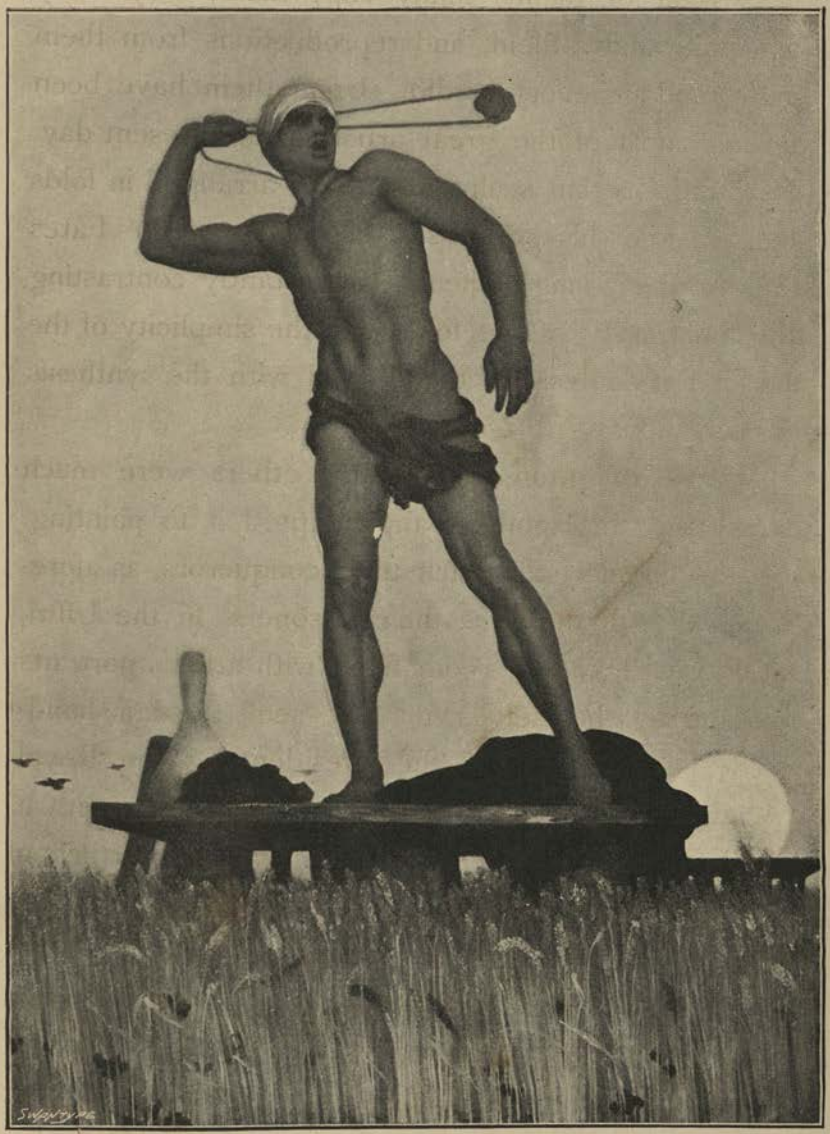
THE LATE LORD LEIGHTON.
*By permission of Lord Davey.*

are English. For the English, from Madox Brown to Burne-Jones, from Watts to Leighton, including Mr. Albert Moore, have formed an ideal of drapery peculiar to themselves. In their opinion the best arranged drapery is that which has the most folds. They are delighted when innumerable pleats hang in garlands round the shoulders, confine the bosom, bind the hips and body, flow to the ground, and mantle round the feet of the goddess. Ruskin says somewhere, in his "Mornings in Florence," that the multiplication and minute rendering of folds in drapery are always signs of idealism and mysticism, and in support of this opinion he quotes the folds of the Canephores of the Parthenon and the surplices of our priests; whilst ample drapery in broad masses is seen in Titian and in those artists who concern themselves less with the mind than with the body. Are the folds of English drapery then a sign of mysticism? No; but Ruskin has said something which puts us on the right track. The Elgin marbles, Canephores or Lapithæ, Gods or Fates, at the British Museum, have not been in England for seventy-five years without exercising a deep influence on British artists. Public orators, like Mr. Harrison, who would have them restored to Greece, and who tell us all that Europe loses by their not being there, forget to tell all that their countrymen have gained by the

possession of them. Many copy them, very many are inspired by them, and reproductions from them are found in every studio. Upon them have been formed most of the great artists of the present day. Now the Grecian sculptor carefully arranged in folds the tunics of his goddesses, especially of the Fates and of the young Athenians, constantly contrasting the multiplicity of the folds with the simplicity of the body, the analysis of the draped with the synthesis of the nude.

Watts, Leighton, and many others were much struck by this method, and adapted it to painting. So the Greeks still teach their conquerors, as aforetime, though they are their prisoners. In the Uffizi, at Florence, in the room filled with artist's portraits painted by themselves, may be seen the fair, handsome, curly head of the President of the Royal Academy, rising out of a rich red mantle with a gold chain, and with a bas-relief from the Parthenon for a background. The portrait is a symbol. At the back of all English academic painting, as at the back of its President's portrait, may be vaguely seen the horsemen of Phidias passing by.

Sir F. Leighton's composition sometimes slightly betrays its formation in the German school of Steinle, amongst the Nazarenes of Frankfort, where he learnt his trade as an artist, after having learned his trade as



"THE EASTERN SLINGER."

THE LATE LORD LEIGHTON.
*By permission of Lord Davey.*

a painter at Florence. In the figures in his two frescoes at the Kensington Museum, the "Arts of War" and the "Arts of Peace" (admirably combined, distributed and balanced as they are), here and there there is a slight confusion and crowding. In the "Arts of War," for instance, two knights, examining the swords newly forged, are making exactly the same gesture, in the same attitude, to express the same idea; this is a pleonasm. On the left, between a knight being armed and another receiving his spurs, there is a whole secondary group, which encumbers the composition unnecessarily. But in the detached figures all the sobriety and nobility of British art appears. Sir F. Leighton strove with all his might for style, and he attained it. In 1895 he exhibited the figure of a poetess seated, by night, on an Alpine summit amidst snowy peaks, clad in a robe which seemed made from those eternal snows, heaped on the summits of the earth and rising towards the heavens whence they fell. He called it "The Spirit of the Summits"; he might have called it "The Spirit of my Painting."

In all his work, though you may find many various inspirations and many different subjects, you will never find a single low or sensual idea, a single appeal to appetite, a single playing with the brush. Nor will you find a figure made by rule, by chance, without a studied attitude or a careful definition of

gesture. Subjects which raise the mind to the summits of life or of history, so that you cannot recall a nose or a leg without the remembrance of some lofty moral lesson, or at least of some great social need, are what Sir F. Leighton has painted, in a more sober style than Overbeck's, and a more manly one than Bouguereau's. Moreover he has never extracted from the annals of nations, the agitation and horror of scenes of war, as our great historical painters are so apt to do; his are scenes expressing union, concord, and the communion of minds tending to the same goal; the moments when all hearts beat in unison; the Madonna of Cimabue carried in triumph through the streets of Florence, or the "Daphnephoria." If ours were ancient history, and Sir F. Leighton had wished to paint it, he would not have chosen the "Jacques," like M. Rochegrosse, nor the "Taking of the Bastille," like M. Flameng; it would have been some national solemnity; that strange unique ceremony, for example, in the chapel of the Invalides, where representatives of all parties and all peoples, enemies of yesterday, and adversaries of to-morrow were united under the banners conquered from them all, and mingled their homage to a Marshal of France who had fought with them all.

The grandeur of human communion, the nobleness of peace, are the themes which have best and often-

est inspired Sir F. Leighton. And he did not find this theme in France or elsewhere. It is essentially English. He did not bring it back from his many voyages, packed up with his Persian enamels. We were looking in his studio just now for an altar to the unknown God. This is the unknown God who met the artist when he set forth in his own land, and who has supplanted all the rest. *

* MRS. LANG. "The Life and Works of Sir F. Leighton, Bart., P.R.A." Art Annual.

# CHAPTER IV

## HISTORIC ART.—L. ALMA-TADEMA, R.A.

MR. ALMA-TADEMA, the English painter best known in France, is not an Englishman, but a Dutchman and a Frisian. In his childhood he watched the women of Leeuwarden going to market in the gay gowns, the splendid silver skull-caps and the veils, which are only worn now by wax models in museums. He spent his youth at Antwerp and at Brussels. At Antwerp he studied painting under Baron Wappers and Baron Leys; at Brussels he painted a whole series of Merovingian scenes and a good many Roman ones. He has only lived in London since 1870, but his art is English, very English, both in its drift and in all the tricks of its composition.

His "line" is well known; the most perfect reconstruction possible of antique life. This Dutchman, whose name sounds like the ending of a Latin verse, does not paint anyone or anything. He only paints the masters of the world, and later than two centuries A.D. he cares not how the world may wag. He follows Tarquin the Proud into his garden where

he mows down the poppies with his sceptre; he mingles with a crowd of petitioners at one of Agrippa's audiences; he jeers at Claudius, hiding behind a curtain, and laughs with glee at a procession of Bacchantes. Nothing diverts him from this retrospective contemplation in which he has lived for thirty years. All his reading, all his research, all his thoughts, lead him to the Eternal City; and to plunge the deeper into it, he has built for himself, in the outskirts of London, a Roman house, in which his dreams become realities. In the garden which surrounds it, and the portico which leads up to it, before crossing the threshold over which a mosaic *Salve* invites you to pass, you feel yourself in a strange land and eighteen hundred years too old. How is this heavy wooden door to be opened, for there is no bell, nor knocker visible; only a hideous, comic mask in copper grins upon the panel. When it occurs to you to seize this figure and hammer on the door, it opens at last with a lingering echo upon the thick walls, marble decorations and polished steps of an antique mansion. There is an atrium with columns, a conservatory with palm trees, and, in one corner an altar with offerings to the household gods. In the studio, with its high dome, its Doric columns, you might fancy yourself with Antistius Labeon, one day when the Proconsul had set

aside his business that he might paint. The water in the fountains trills the same notes as in the time of Ovid; the same flowers are blooming that bloomed at Capreæ. You forget Covent Garden, the Derby, the agricultural crisis, Madagascar, and the Prince of Wales' last public appearance. The artist seems to be exactly what he is; a *genre* painter, a guide, a clever reporter, who describes what he has seen, and repeats what he heard yesterday or to-day, in the crowd of freedmen, or at the Senators' table.

The other morning he saw some graceful young girls carrying flowers, who were grouping themselves round the golden stair which leads from his studio for some ceremony of benediction: he painted them and sent the picture to the New Gallery. You would surprise him if you were to tell him that he does not paint his age or his country; he knows no others. That is not archæology! It is everyday life. His is not the Rome of David or of Poussin, of public ceremonies, famous actions, great events, which convulse the world around the echoing rostrums. Here we have everyday Rome, Rome as it appears in the letters of Cicero to Atticus, the life of antiquity as it is felt in Terence and Plautus. For the present age, weary of great historical events, and famishing for anecdotes, this is the most interesting side of life, because it is the most like our own. Politics have

changed, warfare has altered, institutions have been modified a hundred times over, but man remains the same. How does a document the more on the battle of Cannæ, or the murder of Julius Cæsar concern us to-day? But to know how men loved "when the world was young," how they played, how they talked under the olive trees as they gazed on the "waves white with foam," that attracts and amuses us, and instructs us too without forcing a moral. In these figures of ancient Rome, whom the classics only exhibited to us as superhuman patriots, or heroic combatants wearing a helmet and a belt for the sole defence of their majestic nudity, Alma-Tadema shows us beings like ourselves, as weak as we are, worse rather than better; sheltering themselves, as we do, from the inclemency of the weather; and we are charmed to meet with men whom we had only seen before as statues. At the same time, his pictures increase the feeling of antiquity. His ancients not only seem more real but more ancient than any we have seen before; and Alma-Tadema has succeeded better in attempting merely to be the Sardou of that Empire of which David was the Corneille.

Sometimes indeed anecdote trenches upon history, and in delving, channelling, and tunnelling through the foundations of the modern world, the artist has reached vast galleries where a flood of light illumi-

nates a whole century of ruins and a people in ashes. His "*Ave Cæsar! Io Saturnalia!*" is, for example, one of the greatest reconstructions that art has given us. The subject is well known: Caligula has just been assassinated. The triumphant conspirators have dispersed about the palace, which they have covered with corpses. The bare-footed mob has overthrown the furniture, stained the finely worked carpets, and is amusing itself by playing at sovereignty; that is to say by slaughter and pillage. Women are carrying away treasures, rolled in their cloaks. One of the soldiers, who has pressed on, is drawing the curtain of a recess in which Claudius, the uncle of the dead Emperor, had concealed himself. The man bows deeply, staggering as if he were drunk, and salutes him with the cry "*Ave Cæsar!*" The old Emperor, blanched with fright, ashamed of having been discovered, stupefied at being proclaimed, falls back, trying to veil his face with a piece of the curtain he is clutching in his clenched hand. In this decisive moment, "big with a century," on which hangs the fate of the world, he hesitates, asking himself if these cheers are not raised in ghastly derision, if it is time to show himself, and, as much alarmed by the ironical acclamations of his partisans as by the thought of his adversaries, he remains inert, before the rising spectre of the Empire, and collapses in

the folds of the tapestry. All this time the mob is reiterating the cry we have all heard in hours of frenzy; "*Ave Cæsar! Io Saturnalia!*" charmed to make an Emperor after they had let loose anarchy, rushing on to slavery as to slaughter, and having trampled under foot the leader they dreaded, hastening to set up a god they could despise upon the altar. In the centre of the scene, towering above the living heads, there stands upon a cippus the impassive, marble bust of a real Cæsar turned towards a picture representing a sea-fight, and under the picture is the one word, the antithesis: Actium.

How does Alma-Tadema produce this strong, racy, peculiar impression of antique life, which is all his own? It is usually said to be due to his archæology, and this indeed is wonderful. Not only has the painter the most refined knowledge of antique letters, medals and bronzes, frescoes and statuettes, but he has the scent of a hunter. When he does not know, he guesses. For instance, in his Egyptian picture of the "Death of the First-born" he laid a wreath of flowers at the feet of the corpse which he imagined to be Pharaonic, and ten years later this same decoration was actually found in the royal tombs excavated at Dehrel-Bakri. But this is but a small part of the problem. The archæology of M. Lecomte du Nouy is also very exact, and yet his pictures are far from

giving us the same impression as the restorations of his English brother in art. The peculiar charm of Alma-Tadema's work is not its archæology, but its realistic and, so to speak, photographic character, applied to subjects which have not existed for thirty generations, and which never came within the range of photography. It is difficult to say what a contemporary of Hadrian, recalled to life, would think of the vagaries of antiquity to be seen at Grove-end Road. But if, by good luck, there were no flagrant blunders in them, they would produce a feeling of reality, which certainly no picture by Timomachus or Dorotheus would ever have afforded him.

The new and striking impression made by Alma-Tadema's pictures does not result merely from his having furnished the empty rooms of David's Romans with authentic knick-knacks. It results chiefly from his method of composition, and this is so true that it is enough to arrange one of his pictures in the manner of David or of Couture to take all the taste out of it, even though the same archæological details are preserved. Alma-Tadema's arrangement consists in avoiding all appearance of it. It might be described as a lens turned on to a corner of antique life, to catch by chance all that is contained within the limits of the plate. It matters little if a head appears at the bottom of the canvas without a body; if a breast

is cut lengthwise in half; if a hand is stretched out with no sign of the sex of its owner. The impression of life caught on the wing is none the less well given. Look at his "Hadrian in England"; a visit to the Anglo-Roman potteries. It might be a drawing in the "Graphic" or the "Illustrated News," with the description of some Prince's visit. If the Emperor were dressed in a great coat, and the ladies with him in the fashions of 1895—and there would be no great alterations to be made—and the workmen in blouses, and if it was called Visit of the President to the Vallauris potteries, no one would think of it as an historical composition. But do so with one of David's pictures, and in spite of the modern costumes, the idea of a composition, of antique solemnity, would still remain.

This instantaneous impression is not obtained without faults of composition. Alma-Tadema obtains it by breaking all classical arrangement, by dislocating all the synthetic grouping on which the composition of the great masters depends. Instead of concentrating his effect he breaks it up; instead of connecting his lines, he scatters them; and with them the attention is diverted into every corner. There is no saying where the picture is. In his *Ave Cæsar!* there are three pictures, or at least two, living their independent life with no need of their neighbours to

account for them. The canvas could first be cut at the line of the ledge on which the bust of the Emperor is supported; then at a perpendicular line falling from the hand of the soldier who is raising his buckler. In this way three homogeneous groups could be made of it. At the right end the group of Claudius and the soldier, saluting one another. Call this portion "Ave Cæsar!"; send it to the Exhibition, and no one would ask for more: no one would suspect that it is only a slice of a tragedy in three acts. In the centre is the group of those killed at the foot of Cæsar's bust; this makes a second picture. Lastly, on the left, the group of soldiers and shrieking women, which does not encroach an inch upon the second picture, and is only connected with it and with the first portion by the mind of the spectator, which grasps their mutual relations.

This arrangement is characteristic of Alma-Tadema's talent. It is to be found in his "Feast of Bacchus," in his "Way to the Temple," in his "Hadrian" and in his "Benediction." Here a group, there another, further on a detached figure; all independent, each living its own life, connected by nothing, and in no need of balance. The work could be divided at hap-hazard, without spoiling it; and it is divided in fact, if need be, for the convenience of buyers. Some time ago, Alma-Tadema seeing that he could not find a purchaser for his Hadrian,

on account of a half-nude figure in the foreground—the nude is almost proscribed in English art—"That shall go," he exclaimed, and set himself to cut his picture into three, selling two of the pieces well, and keeping the third, the nude figure for his studio. No one would suppose that these pieces had been part of a whole. This detail clearly shows the fault of the composition. Try to cut up Titian's "Entombment" at the Louvre, and say where the line of demarcation could pass, which would not cut out something important, which would not destroy the work.

And yet it would be an error to believe that Alma-Tadema is like our modern French artists who pay no heed to composition, whose figures respond to one another by chance, by nature, or by a meeting in the studio. Far from this, the jovial Dutchman, who surprises and amuses London with his jests and riddles, with his good-humoured face like a Teniers' model, is at heart a great craftsman, almost as much so in his way as Burne-Jones, and it is impossible to tell the pains he takes to avoid classical rules and the Latin point of view. He painted lately a picture called "Spring"; a theme of young girls descending a street full of antique monuments, and welcoming spring. His first sketch for it was classical; he threw that aside to remodel it entirely, destroying the solemn and synthetical

manner of the first impulse. It is true that he does not compose, but he arranges his figures with great pains, in such a manner as to give the greatest possible force of expression to his picture, and to make it as suggestive as possible. There are no bits which do not tell in Alma-Tadema's pictures, such as are inserted in those of our modern artists apparently by chance, by the flash of a kodak, a tree in the foreground, a railing, a back, a blouse; things which take up space without enriching thought, his bits always express something. In his "Hadrian" there are heads and hands without bodies, but the heads and the hands are speaking. In "Hide-and-Seek" there is one body, but two heads. In "*Ave Cæsar*" five heads at least, each with a different expression, have no bodies to support them. In "Down to the River" there are five most expressive faces and five equally eloquent hands, but never a body. It must be remarked, that as far as the impression made by a scene is concerned, and for the ideas it awakens, limbs, draperies and backs are mostly impedimenta, dead weight; they say nothing. Heads and hands on the contrary most directly convey the painter's ideas. Now, with Alma-Tadema, the square of the heads in proportion to the whole square of the canvas is greater than in any other artist. No one carries less dead weight than he.

The arrangement of the figures is also inspired by the same desire of suggesting ideas, even at the cost of the æsthetic perfection of the whole. What trouble the artist has taken in a replica of his "*Ave Cæsar*" entitled Claudius, to put all the busts of the Emperors on the same line at the same height; Cæsar, Augustus, Tiberias, Caligula, then the scared head of Claudius huddled in his curtain, so that a glance, passing from them to him, from the faces pale with the pallor of marble, to the face pallid with terror, may grasp the antithesis. In his "*Ave Cæsar*" to unify the composition it would have been enough to put a soldier in the foreground, marching towards Claudius with his back turned to the spectator, and pointing him out to the mob with his finger. This one figure would have connected all the lines in the centre, and then it would have been impossible to cut up the picture without destroying the balance of the whole. Perhaps Alma-Tadema did not think of this; but if he had thought of it he probably would not have carried it out. For such a figure would interfere with the Claudius, and would spoil the effect given by the three divisions of the picture: the mob, the blank, the Emperor. Lastly from this disconnection, which Alma-Tadema affects, there naturally results the long, low shape of his canvases, like bas-reliefs; and this shape,

which is that of friezes and of the paintings on antique vases, contributes in no small degree to arouse in us the sensation of the accuracy of his Roman life. This bas-relief arrangement; these gestures and movements borrowed from the paintings on lecythes, are hardly ever to be met with in the French school, which never deserts the laws of composition for the sake of an idea. Our classicists express ideas, but they are composers. Our realists do not compose, but they do not express ideas. Alma-Tadema in his resolute and successful search for an individual and suggestive art, is very distinctly apart from us. And that calls to mind that when, at sixteen, he was studying painting at Antwerp, it was under Baron Wappers, that is under the leader of the school that is most opposed to French influence. Under the same master, but long before, Madox Brown had begun his career.

So, at the opposite links in the chain, we find a common point of departure, anti-French. Alma-Tadema may have been born in Holland, and he may live in a Roman house; but he is none the less an Englishman; he bears the British stamp, and to that he owes his originality. *

* H. Zimmermann. "Alma-Tadema." Art Annual.
E. Gosse. "Laurens Alma-Tadema."
John Ruskin. "The Art of England: The Historic Schools."

# CHAPTER V

## GENRE.—SIR JOHN EVERETT MILLAIS, R.A.

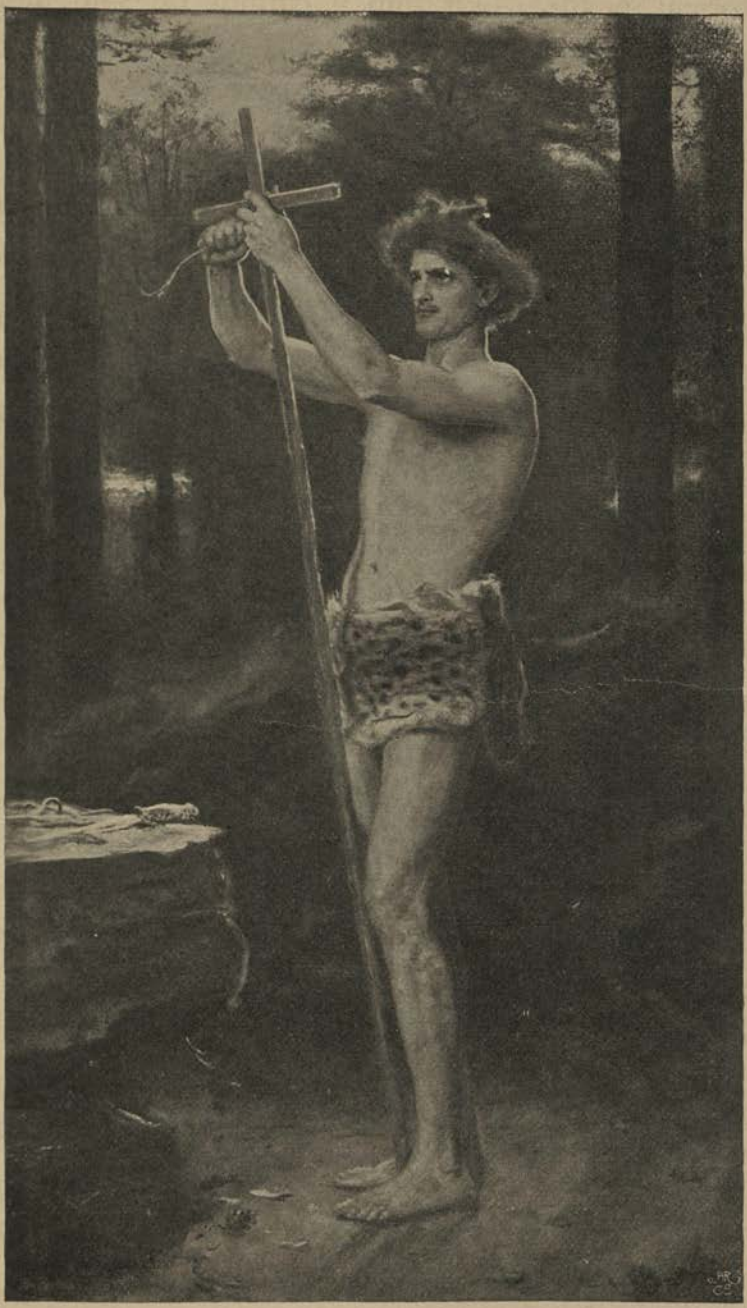
SOME years ago Millais was walking with a friend in Kensington Gardens; he suddenly stood still by the small Round Pond and said:—"How extraordinary it is to think that I once fished for sticklebacks in this very pond, and now here I am a great man, a baronet, with a fine house, plenty of money, and everything my heart could desire." And he walked on gaily. This speech describes Millais, his history, his character, even his art, for they all belong to a happy man. An infant prodigy, at five years old he drew the officers in garrison at Dinan with such mastery that they refused to believe he had done it. A bet was laid, and the sceptics lost for a champagne dinner. At nine he was introduced to the President of the Royal Academy, old Sir Martin Archer Shee, who prophesied that he would conquer a kingdom in art, and he at once began to draw from the round. At eleven he entered the Academy Schools, an unparalleled feat which has never been repeated, and at seventeen he exhibited his first

historical picture. Of him it cannot be said in the words of Gloucester (Richard III):—

"Short summers lightly have a forward spring

for he belied the proverb. His enthusiastic parents swept all difficulties from his path; the highest authorities looked favourably upon him; his companions stood in a row to applaud him. Handsome, graceful, and well made, full of health, and fire, and energy, he speedily became popular. Rossetti likened him to an angel with hands outstretched to help his friends (notably Hunt) in the outset of their career, the outset which is so difficult.

At twenty he was already, in a way, the head master of pre-Raphaelitism, and his "Isabella's Banquet," if it brought him no glory, gave him at least the reputation and the halo of persecution. At twenty-three his "Huguenot" completely re-instated him in public opinion. Fame indeed, this time, stretched over him her protecting hand, and held it over his head for forty-five years as unweariedly as the Muse of Cherubini in M. Ingres' extraordinary picture. Fame was in love with him. The English loved him for his talent it is true, but also for his handsome English face, and frank, adventurous, manly bearing; for his skill in sports, for he was a good shot, a good rider, and an excellent salmon-fisher.

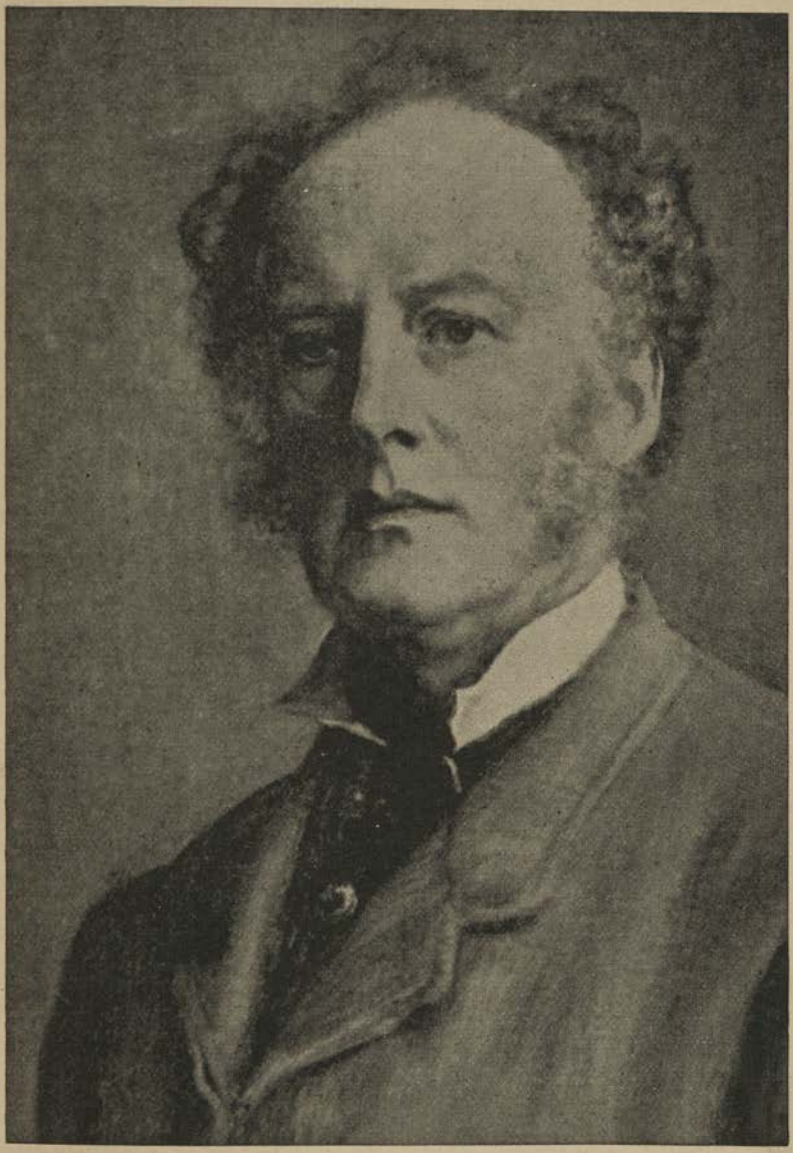


"A FORERUNNER." SIR J. E. MILLAIS, R.A.

Such qualities might do anything. As a pre-Raphaelite he was welcomed by the multitude. When he deserted pre-Raphaelitism to paint sentiment and expression, he was followed by a larger crowd. He gave up emotional subjects for portraiture, and the crowd increased and lauded him to the skies. His success would not have been less had he adopted any sort of art theories, and rejected all his former opinions. Like the tyrant of Samos, he might cast his ring into the sea and he would find it again inside a fish. He revealed himself as a portrait painter in the picture of Mr. Armstrong's daughters, and Holl and Herkomer were of no account beside him. The handsomest carriages in London stood at his door in Palace Gate. Official honours were showered upon him. He was made a baronet, and he would have been the Artist Laureate if there were one. And this is not all, he knew the deepest joys of popularity. The reproductions of his sentimental pictures made him the guest and the friend of the humblest homes, and the same man who had won the plaudits of Swinburne and Ruskin and the most finely cultured men of his day for his interpretation of a tale from Boccaccio, has seen, at the end of his career, his "Bubbles" placarded on all the walls of the United Kingdom by a famous soapmaker. He knew all this, and openly rejoiced over it: he owned it without

false modesty, with the gay, hearty frankness with which he exclaimed in the studio of Munro the sculptor, when someone remarked upon a red mark above his eye, "There are spots in the sun you know!"

Let us consider these spots in the sun. The man who excited such enthusiasm in England was, æsthetically, the least English of the artists of his country. Across the Channel the most popular painter is he who approaches most nearly to French ideas of art. His whole career could be thus defined, historically and æsthetically: "From Ruskin to Pears' Soap, or the stages of a Perversion;" and this alienates him from the English ideal as it is set forth in books. He said that the first duty of a painter is to paint, and it is a strange saying from English lips. He said again: "A fool may be a great artist." He did not choose subjects specially for their morality; he did not strain after exact truth of detail, and he openly allowed that the corners, the accessories, the edges of the picture, should all be sacrificed to the centre. More than that, he painted the fact rather than the idea, and tried to please the eye rather than to touch the soul, in an avowed effort to please the upper classes. And he succeeded, although he expressed less than any other artist the individuality of the English character. Let the partisans of the theory which makes art an emanation of life,



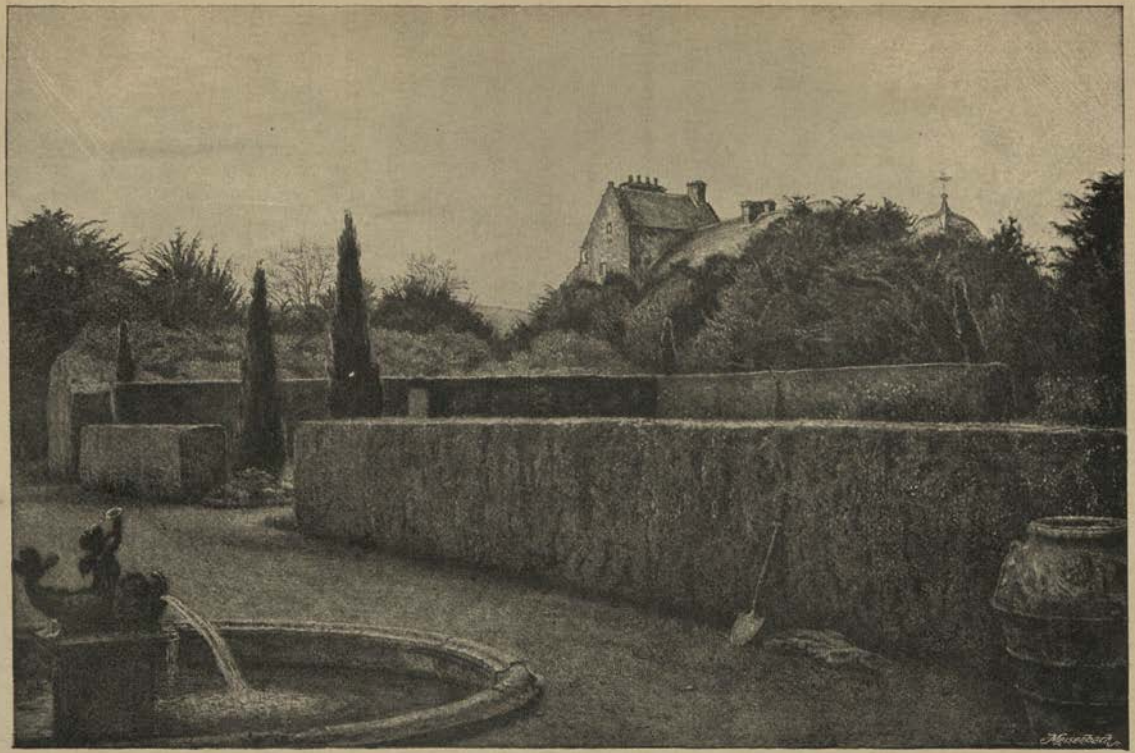
SIR J. E. MILLAIS, R.A.
*From a picture by himself in the Uffizi Gallery.*

explain his success as they may; it will be easy enough for us to do so.

Millais' art responds to a taste which is no more Latin than it is Anglo-Saxon; it responds to a taste common to certain minds among all nations. He satisfies the world in general, the lovers of illustrations, who go straight to the sentimental or amusing pictures at an exhibition and pass by æsthetic thought or moral meaning. He charms all the superficial side of the English mind, as Burne-Jones will charm all refined minds in France when he is better known there. Therefore another boundary must be found for æsthetic preferences than a frontier line, and another origin than that of atmosphere or soil.

What are the characteristics, then, of this much-admired art? In the first place its subjects. Millais devotes himself to such touching scenes as have made Paul Delaroche and M. d'Ennery famous amongst us. He tells the story of a fireman placing the children he has saved in the arms of their mother; of a prisoner's wife, who comes to set her husband free, handing the order for his release to the gaoler; and he has not forgotten the dog, who leaps round his master's legs to show his joy. He shows us the "Return from the Crimea"; a wounded soldier, resting after the war, with his wife and children; the children are playing with toys, amongst which are

a bear, a cock, and a lion; the whole Eastern Question is in your grasp. Then all the famous couples pass before us for whom a tragic fate is in store: "The Huguenot," "Effie Deans," "Lucy of Lammermoor," "The Black Brunswicker." There is "The Proscribed Royalist" concealed in the hollow of a tree, and kissing the hand of his Puritan lady, who has brought him food. There is a Spaniard, disguised as a monk, rescuing his lady-love from prison and from the stake. Then he enlivens himself with a domestic incident, "My First Sermon"; or an historical incident, "The Boyhood of Raleigh." To make such every-day subjects acceptable, they must be treated with genius, and Millais does not so treat them. His imagination was neither very great nor very wide. It is evident that he has not looked long for his subject, but it could be wished that he had looked longer, or at least that he had found it. Whenever he paints a lovers' duet, he places his heroes standing, exactly in the same position, face to face, "The Huguenot," "The Black Brunswicker," "The Wandering Knight," "Yes or No?" "Effie Deans"; they are all in the same attitude. And he does not atone for this uniformity by any great energy of action. The attitudes are correct, the masses well balanced, the parallel lines are well broken, and there is nothing to find fault with. But



"AN OLD GARDEN."

SIR J. E. MILLAIS, R.A.
*By permission of Mr. Thos. McLean.*

there is nothing new in them. Looking at "Effie Deans," or "Lucy of Lammermoor," as far as originality goes we might regret Paul Delaroche; in the finish of his stone backgrounds and his foliage he equals M. Robinet, and M. Bouguereau in his truthful colouring. But these details are painted with the same prominence as the principal figure; they come as far forward, and thus all aerial perspective is destroyed. Compositions like the child with the soap bubbles call for no criticism excepting in the drawing; they are lacking in all that makes a work of art great, and in their conception, as in their subject, the dolls M. Muller used to show us filling their papa's watch with cream were as pleasing. This is *genre* painting in all its foolish and triumphant conceit, the style, that is, which apes great art; the upstart from the *genre* picture which imagines itself to be more full of life than the Academy, and more noble than a mere study, which is jealous of the one and contemptuous of the other, and is beneath them both. This *genre*, the mediocrity of art, was Millais' first characteristic. The second was exactness. Once his portrait or his scene is composed he drew the gesture of his model exactly and without exaggeration. His historical and legendary personages look so simple, so well defined, so *like*, that they might be people you know. They really

are portraits. Most of these tragic lovers were painted from well-known people, from relations or good-natured friends. His famous "Huguenot" represents General Lemprière; the young lady in "The Black Brunswicker" is the portrait of Charles Dickens' second daughter, Mrs. Perugini. In "The Boyhood of Raleigh" he painted his own sons; in the famous "North-West Passage," Trelawney, the intrepid explorer, sat for the head of the old sailor. These pieces are generally well painted, with a bright colouring that is not overstrained, and in harmony which does not quite rise to refinement.

Millais' portraits show us his temperament and his art at their best. Restricted to a portrait, his composition, which is commonplace in historical and *genre* subjects, becomes interesting and almost original. His "Fresh Eggs," simply the portrait of his charming daughter in a Pompadour costume, looking for eggs in a hen-house, shows admirable arrangement. Still better is the portrait of the Misses Armstrong sitting round a table at whist under an enormous mass of azaleas, where the skill of the composition can be unreservedly admired. Everything in this picture, even the rather affected title "Hearts are Trumps!" adds to the charm of the three faces, one full face, the others in profile and three-quarters. His portrait of the "Yeoman of the Guard" is almost a master-

piece. His model is ugly, but there he stands. His harmonies are violent, but they stop short of becoming discordant. Millais had a theory of his own to excuse his brilliant colouring; he said that these were the original tones in the pictures of the masters which we now admire, when we see them toned down by the other great masters called Time and Varnish. Without going into an examination of this hypothesis the painter's violences of colour in the "Yeoman of the Guard" and in "Chill October" may be forgiven him for the harmonies into which they melt.

Of Millais' three manners, the pre-Raphaelite applied to historical scenes; the romantic applied to *genre* painting; and portraiture, the last, was his happiest inspiration. But his reputation has been made, not by his portraits, but by his *genre* pictures. Therefore, when the whole of his work is passed in review for definition, Sir J. E. Millais would appear as a librettist of painting. Like libretto writers of opera he did not create his subjects, he chose well-known, rather hackneyed, themes. He expressed himself in a sonorous and intelligible language; he did not display such faculty of invention that he could be said to re-shape them, nor such mastery of form that he could be said to enrich them; and he accepted the applause of the boxes and of the pit without a distinct

understanding whether it was bestowed on the subject or its author, on the story or its narrator, on the book of words or the music. *

* W. ARMSTRONG. "Sir J. E. Millais, Bart.: His Life and Work." Art Annual.

H. QUILTER. "Preferences in Art."

W. BELL SCOTT. Autobiographical Notes.

MRS. BARRINGTON. "Why is Millais our Popular Painter?" Contemporary Review.

J. E. MILLAIS. "Thoughts on Art." Magazine of Art.

J. RUSKIN. "Pre-Raphaelitism." Arrows of the Chase.

H. HUNT. "The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood."

# CHAPTER VI

## PORTRAITURE.—H. HERKOMER, R.A.

HERKOMER is the great portrait painter of the United Kingdom. He paints also subject pictures and Bavarian landscapes, but his portraits are unequalled, and these give him his place amongst English masters. Holl has had much success in portraiture; Millais has been as happy in it as in everything else he has attempted. But perhaps in our days, as in those of Henry VIII, a foreigner—a German—was needed to sound the depths of the British physiognomy, to extract from it all the self-esteem and resolution, the calm passion and hot irritability, the manly nobility and the childish respectability with which the Creator has endued it.

Like Holbein, Herkomer comes from Germany, but his entry into England was far less magnificent. This member of the Royal Academy, the master of a hundred and fifty artists at the Bushey school, the castellan of Lululund, did not arrive in London in the prime of life, in the fulness of his powers, with letters of recommendation to the Chancellor. When

a family of Bavarian artisans landed on the English shores in May 1857, leading a delicate child of eight years old by the hand, no-one could have presaged such good fortune for him. The family had fled from their native place—Waal, near Landsberg on the Lech—having been ruined by the revolution of 1848, and had emigrated to America. There, in spite of the unceasing toil of the father, a carpenter, an artistic, energetic, intelligent, steady workman; in spite of the struggles of the mother, a musician by instinct and by education, they could barely live, and they needed not only to exist, but to secure to their child a future career. Many would have lost heart, and accused fate of being too strong for them. But this old, long-headed, warm-hearted German knew nothing of those sophisms, which excuse all effort by exaggerating obstacles, and invite you to weep over the ruins of the past whilst the materials for the future are passing you by. He took the steamboat to try his chances in England, saying doggedly: "My son shall be a painter." Ill luck was tired out, and gave way. His son became a painter, and a great painter, as he had wished. He had still many trials to pass through, but at least the brave parents, who had smoothed his path, could rejoice at the first steps he made in it. Now they are no more; but on the banks of the Lech, near Landsberg, in Bavaria, a

STUDY OF A LABOURER'S HEAD.
(Water-colour.)
PROFESSOR HERKOMER, R.A.
*By permission of C. W. Mansel-Lewis, Esq.*

tall gothic tower, built by the son in memory of his mother, rises above the trees; and in his castle of Lululund, near London, the great central tower also bears the name of Mother's Tower. In this way the artist has united both his countries, by a thoroughly German symbolism, raising in each the same filial monument.

Portraiture, as Herkomer understands it, is no offshoot of the old English portrait such as Reynolds and Gainsborough painted, such as could be seen at the Sedelmeyer gallery in 1894, such as M. J. Blanche is trying to revive in France. It is not shown off by a display of rich accessories; it is not thrown up on green branches, or on a blood-red battlefield. Herkomer gives his sitter a plain background; an ideal background such as has never yet been seen, any more than have those of M. Bonnat or M. Carolus Duran. Sometimes the background is a whitish wall on which the head casts a shadow. No costly fancy, no useless knick-knack, no glittering colour, interferes with the face. So the face stands out and catches the eye at once, and fixes the attention. But it does not stand alone. Herkomer is not so heedless of the rest of his figure as to entrust the drawing of the coat to a tailor, or to let a servant in the studio clean his brushes on the lower part of the canvas, in the hope that it will represent

a dress to uncritical eyes at a distance. In one of his portraits everything plays its part; the well-shaped arms rest on the back of a chair, or lie on the knees; the hands are clasped as in "Miss Grant," or hang wearily down as in "A Brown Study." The bust is generally a little thrown back, the chest well curved, the figure supple, the shoulders well developed, the neck well set; the draperies flow downward and are as carefully studied as the head. In the two portraits we have referred to, which were at the Exhibition of 1889, generally called the Lady in Black and the Lady in White, the attitude is both natural and skilful. There is the strength and the ease of life, the firmness of a solid frame, and the softness of the relaxation of muscles in repose, the dignity of what is permanent, and the charm of what is passing; such movements do honour to the human form.

Herkomer's colouring is equal to his composition, and equally restrained. He no longer affects the sombre brilliancy in which he at first copied his master, Frederick Walker; nor the audacity and stippling of Watts; still less the laboured gloss of Millais; he is almost French in his colouring which is delicate and harmonious, laid on in large broad touches equally distributed, without clashing or discord or irregularity. He does not seek for effect by easy contrasts. In the Lady in White, a rather

"OUR VILLAGE." PROFESSOR HERKOMER, R.A.
*By permission of C. W. Mansel-Lewis, Esq.*

dirty white, the dress is white upon white, with only a well-preserved difference in the tones. His figures are not thrown up in strong relief. The effects which are usually obtained by dry, worked up backgrounds boldly painted over, are not often employed by Herkomer; any more than the fleeting transparency due to fluid colours. The reason of this is that he has long considered that no oil painting should as far as possible resemble a fresco, that there should be no substructure of colours underlying the upper coat, and that the dryer the colour the better. This induced him to paint his famous picture, the "Last Muster," on a white canvas, and with such dry colours that it was necessary to cover the picture with extra coatings in front and at the back to prevent its disintegration. It is curious to remark how this Bavarian, who came long after the pre-Raphaelite revolution, and was formed under a master who took no part in it, is so imbued with the English theory of colour that as far as that is concerned he might be Hunt, Watts, or Rossetti.

But it is not his method of colouring only that separates Herkomer from the foreign school and attaches him to the English one, it is especially the intense expression, and the individuality which he gives to his figures. In the two or three subject pictures which brought him into note, he carried

these qualities to a height which they seldom reach in France. His "Last Muster," painted in 1874, was exhibited at the Guildhall in 1894. His picture of the Chapel of the Charterhouse is at South Kensington. In the one are seen the Chelsea Veterans seated in ranks on the benches of their chapel, in their red uniforms, at divine service: it is their last parade. In the other are the pensioners of an almshouse for old, ruined gentlemen, also assembled at a service.

From the psychological point of view it is the same subject, in both there are the old men survivors of a hard struggle, who have at last found shelter and rest, and a certainty of daily bread. They are thinking of the past, once so bright, and they know well that there is nothing for them to look forward to in the future but a safe and monotonous road leading to the goal which we must all reach. It is the same thought as in the "Harbour of Refuge," painted by Herkomer's master, F. Walker; that represents an almshouse for old men; a garden, crimson with the last rays of the setting sun; a weather-worn flight of stone steps, on which is tottering an old woman with life in her yet, supported by a young girl; beneath them other poor pensioners, and old buildings covered with ivy thrown open to these flickering existences, "comme un port

"LIGHT, LIFE AND MELODY." PROFESSOR HERKOMER, R.A.

*By permission of C. W. Mansel-Lewis, Esq.*

(Water-colour, 8 ft. × 7 ft.)

en ruine à la barque en détresse," (F. Coppee,) and, on the grass-plot, a lusty young mower making haste to mow down all he can before night-fall; a striking image of the great mower of men, who is never at rest in the dwellings of the aged.

From the æsthetic point of view, Herkomer's two subjects differ entirely from each other. In the "Last Muster" the problem was to throw up the faces on their dazzling uniforms; in the Chapel of the Charterhouse to avoid their standing out too vividly against their black coats. Herkomer has succeeded in both cases. He has succeeded partly through the deep, warm, individual interest he has put into every face, so that they might be so many different portraits, so many different lives, so many untold, unknown dramas, seeking for expression by the light in their eyes, the suppressed smile on their lips, the depth of their wrinkles, the contraction of their bushy eye-brows.

In the "Last Muster," an incident, simply and unobtrusively introduced, breaks the monotony of the long rows of heads absorbed in devotion. At the first glance it does not attract attention; a second look shows one of the veterans sitting in the second row with his head drooping, and his hand lying motionless, half-opened upon his knee, as if he had ceased to breathe; his neighbour, an old man like

himself is feeling his arm, as if to convince himself that the arm is still alive, and his comrade has not passed away. This incident is unheeded by the rest of the congregation. There is an acuteness of observation, and a subtlety of thought here, which is seldom found in our French artists.

One of Herkomer's most distinctive features would be overlooked if he were considered only as a painter. Besides that he is a Professor, a Director of a school of art, the founder and architect of an æsthetic colony; he is Impresario, scene-painter, actor, musician and machinist. In 1883 a gentleman living at Bushey, a village fifteen miles from London, asked Herkomer to give painting lessons to his ward: the artist settled at Bushey, the fame of his lessons spread, and a multitude of young artists hastened to profit by them. Now there are a hundred and fifty of them, men and women, and, as the school could not contain them, for it is a mere nursery of art, a new town has sprung up. More than fifty studios have gathered round Herkomer's studio, all of which follow his directions or seek his advice. Sundays he receives these independent artist in the palace of Lululand, which he has built. It represents the labour of a whole family; his father made the woodwork for it; his uncle in America the hangings; he himself made the plans and painted

"DER BITTGANG." PROFESSOR HERKOMER, R.A.

*By permission of C. W. Mansel-Lewis, Esq.*

the decorations. Lululund is solidly built in the Romanesque style, with enormous walls, which will be standing ten centuries hence if they are let alone. As an Oxford Professor, Herkomer lectured on the principles to which he has set his hand, on stone and canvas and wood. To amuse his colony of artists he has built a theatre, on which he lavishes the resources of his varied genius. In the first place picturesque illusion is carried to its farthest limits; the stage, for example, instead of being made of flat, bare boards, as at the opera, is cut into the shape of paving-stones. There are no foot-lights lighting the figures from below. The Bushey Moon has a well-deserved reputation; a round box containing three electric lamps, with a reflecting lens, and a transparent paper on which are painted the Mountains of the Moon, rises slowly, by means of an ingenious piece of mechanism, in a gauze sky. On this stage musical dramas are played by Mr. and Mrs. Herkomer with the pupils of the great artist. The dramas are called, "The Witch," the "Revenge of Time," "Filippo," which is simply Coppée's "*Luthier de Crémone*."

Dramatic art is a family taste with the Herkomers. The artist's mother was a good musician; his father, the carpenter, played the part of Pontius Pilate in the Passion Play given in 1849 at Waal, more

naturalistically even than at Oberammergau, and the painter himself intends to take Judas, if the play is ever given again in his native place.* So, he composes the pieces, and writes the music, and paints the scenery, and arranges the costumes, and goes upon the stage. The strange figure of Salvator Rosa seems to be revived in this epitome of talents, and this exuberance of æsthetic achievements; or one of those masters of the middle ages, now a mason, now a sculptor, scorning no toil and rejecting no tool. This son of an artist workman wishes to remain a working artist. Of all this movement for the union of Arts and Crafts, which is the glory of modern England, as we shall see farther on, Herkomer is the most vigorous and most original expression.†

* Letter in the Daily Graphic, June 16, 1894.

† W. L. Courtney. "Prof. Herkomer and his Work." Art Annual 1892. "The Charterhouse" is in the Chantry Room, South Kensington Museum; "Eventide" at the Liverpool Art Gallery.

GROUP OF FIGURES FROM "AT DEATH'S DOOR." PROFESSOR HERKOMER, R.A.

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# CHAPTER VII

## LEGENDS.—SIR E. BURNE-JONES.

Sir E. Burne-Jones is in his studio. To reach it he has to cross a long garden, half meadow, half orchard, as green as the lawns of Meriaugis, as wooded as the forest of Broceliande. It is completely shut in, so that no intruder can disturb him. The organ at the end of the hall is silent; the sketches hanging on the walls are in grey tones which do not distract the eye. Outside, drops of fine rain, London rain, patter on the leaves one by one, like invisible fingers wandering over a silent key-board. Sir Edward is reading, not working, reading a book beloved for thirty years, and lost in thought over his reading. He is plotting vaguely, ideally, against things in general, as they are arranged in England. Is he reading a speech of Gladstone's, or a socialistic diatribe by his friend William Morris. Nothing of the kind: it is the history of King Arthur.

It is about fourteen hundred years since the Angles and Saxons, in their long keels, invaded Great Britain and swept away the remains of the Roman

dominion. After a few more victories they established themselves as masters of the island; but a man rose up against them of whom history tells us nothing, but legend has made him so grand that we bless history for its silence. This man was not born a prince. Once when the throne was vacant, and the Britons were trying in vain to agree in the choice of a successor to the last king, a new marble stair sprang forth from the Cathedral of Caerleon; on this stair was a steel anvil, and in the anvil a sword was fixed, with this inscription: "He who can draw me forth, by Christ, shall be king." All the knights present tried in vain: but a child, brought from the forest by an unknown grey-beard, easily drew forth the sword, and the archbishop crowned him king amidst the shouts of the people. This was King Arthur, and the enchanted sword bore the name of Excalibur. The barons tried in vain to decry his birth; by his deeds he proved it to be noble. He delivered Leodogran, King of Cameliard, from the heathens who attacked him, and from wild beasts who snatched the infants from their mothers in his very capital, and in reward he obtained in marriage the King's fair daughter Guinevere. He led the Britons to battle, and repulsed the invaders in a dozen famous combats when "the sky was veiled in dust and the earth in blood."

FROM THE ROME MOSAICS.
BY SIR E. BURNE-JONES.
*By permission of Mr. Fred. Hollyer.*

He was accompanied by an ancient bard, the son of a demon and of a British woman, a magician on his father's side, a Christian on his mother's, who always appeared at critical moments when there was need of counsel or of prophecy. This bard was Merlin: he knew everything, and could take all kinds of shapes; his predictions aroused men's ardour, and, when the hour of battle came, he cast terrible enchantments over the foe. At his call, the men of Scotland, of Cornwall, of Cambria, of Wales, of Brittany or Armorica, all the Britons in fact, all the Celts, hastened to range themselves under King Arthur's Dragon banner, shouting:

"Our nations shall rise and drive the Saxons out."

Not only did Arthur drive out the Saxons, but he conquered in turn Denmark, Norway, and France, and repulsed the Moors. He was a sort of British Charlemagne. He founded the famous order of the Knights of the Round Table, all equal amongst themselves, all one heart, all proved men of valour, with consciences of pure gold, and muscles of steel, their raiment made of four materials: "Courage, wealth, skill and courtesy." These knights, Lancelot, Gawain, Tristram the nephew of King Mark, Percivale, the Knight of the Graal, Bedivere, Galahad, Modred and many more, gathered at the court of King Arthur at Camelot, and witched the world

with their exploits. Whenever they heard of a lady to be protected, a giant to be crushed, a wyvern or a dragon to be decapitated, a strange challenge to be accepted, one of them would sally forth, and when he returned victorious there would be feastings and tournaments without end.

One day, when they were all met in the great hall at Camelot, a loud shock made the roof tremble, a bright light dazzled their eyes, and the Graal, the chalice out of which Christ had drunk at the Last Supper, and which had been brought to England by Joseph of Arimathæa, passed by like a flash of lightning. All the knights swore that they would see it again. The king entreated them in vain not to leave him in his old age.

> "How often, O my knights,
> Your places being vacant at my side,
> This chance of noble deeds will come and go
> Unchallenged, while ye follow wandering fires.

They all set forth in quest of the Graal, and only three returned at the end of a year satisfied, having found the object of their desires. The others had followed "wandering fires," and the famous order was decimated.

Then began the decline of Arthur's reign; the quest of the Graal had been his 1812 and Moscow.

Treason crept in amongst the knights of the Round

Table. Lancelot, the most valiant, and hitherto the most faithful, became for King Arthur what Tristram was at the same time for King Mark in Cornwall, but without the excuse of the love-philtre. Queen Guinevere, discovered with Lancelot, took refuge in a convent where she was not recognised, and where she learned from a young novice that the whole kingdom was on fire on her account. Modred had raised the standard of revolt. Lancelot was no longer there to defend the old king. The Saxons had returned to the attack. A decisive battle was impending. At this moment Guinevere heard the steps of a knight echoing on the cloister floor, and knew that the king had discovered her retreat. She falls to the ground, hiding her face in her hair; she receives Arthur's pardon and hears him bid her farewell without raising her head. The footsteps die away and all is over. On the battle-field of Camblann Victory, faithless in her turn, deserted the Britons. The Knights of the Round Table fell one by one, around their king, who himself succumbed, mortally wounded.

The people would give no credence to Arthur's death. A rumour spread that he had been carried away in a magic bark, to the Island of Avalon, the resting place of heroes. He will return, was repeated in the castles and cottages of Great and Little Bri-

tain, crushed under the rule of the Angles, the Druids; have said, "Heroes can be born again." The Britons, repulsed by the Anglo-Saxons, gathered in the south-west corner of England, and ever cherished the hope of seeing him re-appear, "an old man whiter than snow, mounted on a white horse."

They awaited him for ten centuries, confiding in the predictions of Merlin, in spite of contradictory events and the condemnation of the Fathers of the Council of Trent. All the conquerors of the Celtic races, all foreign dynasties one after another, heard resounding in their ears the terrible prophetic accents of the wizard. The ghost of King Arthur rose before them all, like Banquo's, trying to take a vacant place at the banqueting table of the ruler. Henry II and John, Harold and Henry VI, all fought against this shadow, and could not chase it away. Their scribes wrote, their minstrels sang, their warriors fought against it in vain. Henry II went so far as to exhume the corpse of the so-called Arthur, near Glastonbury monastery in the Isle of Avalon, and gave him a magnificent funeral, but the Britons persisted in their belief that he was still alive. Long after they pursued strangers, who doubted the fact, with stones. At every national rising, at every fresh appearance of an opponent to the Anglo-Saxons, it seemed to them that he had re-appeared. They believed they

recognised him in William the Conqueror, who came from France singing the glories of Charlemagne; in the Welsh prince Rhys, who defied the Conqueror in the mountains of Karno; in that Cadwallader who overthrew the Normans' fortresses; in that Llewellyn, who gathered the Welshmen together, and starved the English out of the Welsh Marches. But all these leaders ended in defeat, and the head of the last one set upon a pike on the Tower of London terrified the Britons. After that the faithful looked across to France; they greeted Arthur of Brittany, who was brought up in the woods by his kindly barons, as the great Arthur, for he seemed indeed to be the young wild boar predicted by Merlin. The boy was assassinated by John Lackland. They waited long until they could welcome the ghost again in that other Arthur, Duke of Brittany, the Constable who, with Joan of Arc, crushed the English.

So the prophecy of Merlin passed from land to land, inciting the Britons in England against the Anglo-Saxons, and the Bretons in France against the English; in one word the Celts everywhere against the conquering races. This legend cut down a hundred times and sprouting a hundred times afresh, like the rose-bush which links the tombs of Tristram and Isolde, is not the peculiar property of Great Britain. On both sides of the Channel the

"hope of the Bretons" has long been a laughing stock; that is the fidelity to a vanished dynasty and an unattainable ideal, which has fired the warriors of Armorica for ten centuries, and which even now perhaps animates the electors of Finisterre. When in 1793 the Chouans marched to battle, it was not the name of Louis XVII which rang out in the national songs, but it was still and for ever the immortal name of King Arthur wounded at Camblann.

Even now the hope of the Bretons is not dead. It has not been really buried in the cemetery of Quiberon, any more than it was in the shrine at Glastonbury. Throughout the world a sympathetic current is reviving for the Arthurian cycle; not as a political hope, but as an æsthetic feeling. The Celtic spirit has revived, and risen against the Teutonic spirit. There is no question of driving the Saxons and the Angles out of the Island, but all those figures of false academic spirit or of trivial subjects, which came over long ago from Germany or Holland, as well as that aristocratic conception of art, which has so long prevailed in the United Kingdom. The melancholy, the mystery, the subtle sweetness of the Celtic spirit, have come back into fashion with pre-Raphaelitism. At the same time the taste for decorative art, for art applied to articles

of daily use, to furniture, to houses, to the utensils of life, democratic art in a word, has replaced the exclusive taste for easel pictures, a luxury reserved for the rich, like champagne or orchids. Mystery as opposed to story-telling, free fancy substituted for academic pleasantries; the educational and popular conception of art, which has succeeded to its aristocratic position, these are products of the Celtic spirit. It is curious to remark that the leaders of this movement are Gaelic, Irish, Highlanders, descendants of the men who were vanquished at Camblann.

"I was living at Oxford," says Mr. Grant Allen, "when æstheticism was still an esoteric cult, and I remarked that almost every disciple of the new Gospel was an avowed Celt, a Gael or a Highlander, an Irishman or at least of Celtic origin. Bear me witness, O Christ Church, Magdalen and Brasenose!"

Mark the warriors whom Arthur has returned to reign over in the studios After Rossetti, who painted Lancelot in the chamber of Guinevere, Lancelot and Guinevere at the tomb of Arthur, the Sanc-Graal, Lancelot and the Lady of Shalott, there is Watts, who once smiled on Sir Galahad; Madox Brown, who was inspired with the death of Arthur; Burne-Jones, who paints Merlin and Vivien, the Quest of the Graal, Sir Galahad, the Sleep of Arthur; W.

Morris, Arthur Hughes, Val Prinsep, Spencer Stanhope, almost all the neo-pre-Raphaelites, who have revived the epic, with the poets Swinburne, Tennyson and Comyns Carr.

Some idea may be formed of the revival of the Arthurian legend in England from that of the Napoleonic legend in France. Everything has been proved against both heroes; the fame of both is revived, and it may be said of the Emperor, as of the King, that if the populace no longer believe that he lives, they sometimes, in days of distress, regret that the Druids were mistaken in saying heroes can be born again. But in his æsthetic fate King Arthur is more fortunate than the Emperor. His place in history is sufficiently distant to save him from disparagement in an attempt to present him more accurately. When Napoleon with his eighteen marshals is lost in the fabulous haze which surrounds Merlin's friend, he may perhaps then find a Tennyson, who will describe him as tarrying fully armed in the Island of Avalon, or of St. Helena, and whatever exhumations may be made, as by Henry II, or by Louis Philippe, his living figure will appear under the idealised features of a demi-god. When time enough has elapsed to ennoble the types, to alter the costumes, and to clothe the warriors who fought at Moskowa like those who fell at Camblann, a Burne-Jones and a

William Morris may appear, the one to design, the other to weave into tapestries, the figures of Ney, of Murat, of Josephine and of Prince Eugène, which shall delight the eyes of the thirtieth century. Then History will have served some purpose, because it will have raised the eyes and the thoughts of men to beings superior to themselves, instead of keeping them lowered upon ugliness and trivialities. And the Emperor's face, which has so long fluctuated between Marius and Cæsar, will at last be perpetuated, not as M. Thiers, for example, is perpetuated, but like the face of La Gioconda, because it has attained, not to truth, the ever-changing beauty of history, but to beauty, the truth of art which is unchangeable.

Burne-Jones' art has grown up from the seed sown by Madox Brown, on the stem cultivated by Rossetti. Just as Rossetti had flown to Madox Brown in his early youth, so Burne-Jones at two and twenty fled to Rossetti whose designs for illustrating Allingham's poems he had seen. Born of an inartistic family, without any known artistic ancestors, brought up at Birmingham, the least æsthetic place in the world, destined for the Church by his education, the sight of that drawing of "Elfinmere," signed D. G. R., made the same effect upon Burne-Jones as the sight of "Harold" had made on Rossetti seven years before. He could think of nothing else. He talked

of it in the Oxford quadrangles with his friend William Morris, an undergraduate destined to take orders like himself, and both of them grew enthusiastic. One day, unable to restrain himself, he came to London to try and see the master of whom he dreamed. He dared not aspire to speech with such a genius; but to follow him with his eyes, to hear the sound of his voice appeared to him the height of mortal happiness. This happiness was his one evening, when he had waited at the drawing class of a workman's college, leaning against the wall under a gas jet, asking of each fresh comer, is it he? At last the master arrived. Burne-Jones was introduced to him and admitted to his circle. There to his horror, he heard men, who were but men, questioning the enchanter, disputing with him and even (what sacrilege!) contradicting him to his face. He himself, seated in a corner, in silent ecstasy, contemplated his divinity, encircled by clouds of smoke from all the pre-Raphaelites' pipes around him.

This was in 1856. Henceforward Burne-Jones deserted theology and gave himself up to painting under the guidance of Rossetti, who set him at first exclusively to copy realities, whilst Rossetti told him of his dreams. Meanwhile Burne-Jones' friend, William Morris, was building houses and writing poems. It seemed to him that in the modern world enough

attention was not paid to the arts of decoration and furniture; the minor arts as he calls them, which are the only ones in constant enjoyment. No one goes every day to a museum, nor every evening to the opera; but everyone sleeps every night in a bed, and sees at every moment the hangings and furniture which are around him. These humble friends and constant companions of our sight and taste, can in great measure refine or degrade them, develop or ruin them. To endow England with æsthetic architecture and æsthetic furniture was, from the first, William Morris' object, and so it was to the end, though it has been complicated with all sorts of socialistic ideas. Wall papers for humble houses, tapestries for great mansions, painted windows for churches, carpets, curtains, coverings for sofas and arm-chairs, all the contents of a great upholsterer's shop, were thrown upon the London market by the fine poet of the Earthly Paradise, and the "News from Nowhere." To make designs for his tapestries a great artist was wanted; and for thirty-five years this artist has been Burne-Jones. Their unbroken partnership began in Rossetti's studio. In 1860 Morris had a house built at Upton near Bexley, by the architect, P. Webb, after his own principles, and he asked his friend to decorate it for him. The artist agreed, and took his subject from Italy in the "Nozze

del Buondelmonte." Two years later he set out for the land of Italy whose skies he had so well imagined, and there, in company with Ruskin, studied the great masters.

When he returned to London, he discarded all imitations and former limitations, and definitely fixed his own style. Such as he was then he will be to the last. Henceforward he draws his inspiration plainly from Botticelli and Mantegna. Far from making any mystery of it, he filled his rooms with reproductions of these two masters, as Turner loved to show a Claude Lorraine beside his own works. From Botticelli he took his type of female beauty, such as you see it in the fresco of the "Nozze de Tornabuoni," on the staircase of the Louvre; the eyes rather round, the cheek-bones forced into prominence by the hollowness of the lower part of the face, a slightly turned up nose, a full sensual mouth rising close to the nostrils, a lengthened chin. From Mantegna he copied his elegant types of knights in armour so closely that, looking at his King Cophetua kneeling before the beggar maid he is to make his queen, he might be Francesco de Gonzague kneeling before the "Vierge de la Victoire," in the collection of the Primitives in the Louvre. He goes boldly to the Florentines for the secret of their grace of body. He takes their faces and into these renascent,

vigorous, almost classical faces, this Northerner breathes the fatalistic, melancholy, pessimistic spirit of Byron. He entombs these Italians, made for merriment, and changes them into the gloomy companions of Merlin. He has Swinburne's verses recited to Donatello's statues. His figures have the muscles of the Renascents and the gestures of the Primitives. The beauty is there, but it does not display itself; it seems almost to ignore and conceal itself. Botticelli weeps, Mantegna has the spleen, Burne-Jones is born to us.

Consider his "Briar-rose," his "Perseus," his "Quest of the Graal," his "St. George." His knights advance with a pretty motion, but as stiffly as if they were walking on sword-points, and in fear of being contaminated by all the surrounding objects. Generally they draw back their bodies to avoid the thing to which they bend their heads. They are weary of their strength, embarrassed by their height, and almost ashamed of their good looks. They are built up like pillars, and they sway like reeds. Their heads, heavy with dreams, fall on to their shoulders, and the whole body bends under its weight. They might be shy young gods entering the world for the first time. They do not know what to do with their athletic arms, with their chests like those of victors of the Olympian games, with their legs like those

of hunters of wild boars. Their limbs are not braced for an effort; their gestures are neither rapid nor violent. If they stretch themselves, it is wearily; if they kill a monster, it is with regret. Their muscles are strong, their shoulders straight and well set up, their cuirasses are stiff, but a mysterious malady makes this covering of flesh and of iron to quiver. You feel they are indifferent to and take small account of the magnificent human machine with which Nature has endowed them. They are spirits surprised at finding themselves embodied.

This impression of intense languor and graceful stiffness, of complicated, rather pessimistic psychology, Burne-Jones produced by means of many systematic deviations from nature, to which he subjects his figures. In the first place he makes them eight and a half heads high, sometimes more, and to suit them he makes his palace doors of extraordinary height for their breadth. Having made his figure very long, he still more exaggerates this effect by raising the hips; but, as he wishes to preserve all the suppleness of the bust, instead of making the hips project most above, he rounds and lowers their spring. In the same way he exaggerates the hips in proportion to the shoulders in his female figures, and diminishes them in his male figures; so that it might be said, notably in his "Fortune's Wheel,"

"MINISTERING ANGELS." SIR E. BURNE-JONES.

that he wished to illustrate the ridiculous academic theory, that the male body should have the shape of an egg standing on its small end, and the female body that of an egg on its broad end.

Once his figure is blocked in he generally throws the weight of the body on to one leg, as Ingres did in his "Source." This stiffened leg, arches inwards, the whole of one side of the body leans upon it; the hip projects and tends upwards, the shoulder drops, but the other side of the body is supple and sinuous; the shoulder rises, the extended leg bends, and the knee is brought a little forward, sending the foot back. This position is repeated in Burne-Jones' works until it becomes wearisome. Then to gain still more suppleness and lightness, the leg with the knee bent rests on the point of the foot, which raises the bent knee higher than the stiff knee. This is a very great systematic affectation, for when a man supports himself naturally on one leg, he places the other foot flat on the ground, as his attitude would otherwise become very fatiguing.

Thus designed Burne Jones' figures always look as if they were coming down stairs, excepting always his angels. They look as if they had been hung with their feet some inches above the earth, and their bodies elongated towards it. The arms of his knights are never tense, and the undulation that

is produced by a complete distension of the muscles, extends to the tips of their fingers, the hand often falling powerless, like an ornament. It is impossible to imagine them running, working, fighting. His Perseus in the coils of the monster looks like an indolent gardener climbing up a fruit tree, armed with a pruning-knife. And yet the bust does not curve, and the shoulders are seldom arched. The head hangs mournfully on the breast, and whilst the brow is bent towards the ground, the brilliant eyes look up from under its arch towards Heaven; an attitude, which gives, to the most commonplace face, an air of meditation and passion. The neck is as flexible as the rest of the body, which is constantly in motion. The draperies follow, or more often are opposed, to this undulating movement. The innumerable folds, generally in horizontal lines, surround and confine the body like the thousand threads with which the Lilliputians bound Gulliver. Here and there scarves wave in the air, moved by chimerical hurricanes. In spite of all the charm of detail it cannot be ignored that Burne-Jones obtains the infinite grace of his figures only by sacrificing the great features of proportion and natural attitude. And the world in general must instinctively appreciate this, since the pictures which are considered his master-pieces ("King Cophetua," the "Chant

d'Amour," "Love amongst the Ruins," and the garden court in the "Briar Rose,") are precisely those in which there is not a single figure standing upright. *

These personages live in a world created for them by Burne-Jones, shut in by rose trellises, where the rocks are grottoes, and the forests bowers, as if Paradise were a well-kept garden, the owner of which amused himself by collecting the rarest and most costly curiosities. There is little or no sky; the frame comes down low and prevents the eye and the attention from wandering, fixing them both

* In order not to load the text with foot notes I will collect together here all the references that relate to the artist's manner of drawing.

(I) He makes his figures eight and a half heads high, sometimes more. See "Sposra di Libano," "Merlin and Vivien," "Temperance," "Fortune's Wheel," "The Annunciation."

(II) Doors of extraordinary height for their breadth. See the "Annunciation" and "The Brazen Tower."

(III) By raising the hips rounds and lowers their spring. See "Fortune's Wheel," "The Goddess Fires" in Pygmalion, and the Virgin in the "Annunciation."

(IV) His angels look as if they had been hung. See "The Annunciation" and "The Star of Bethlehem."

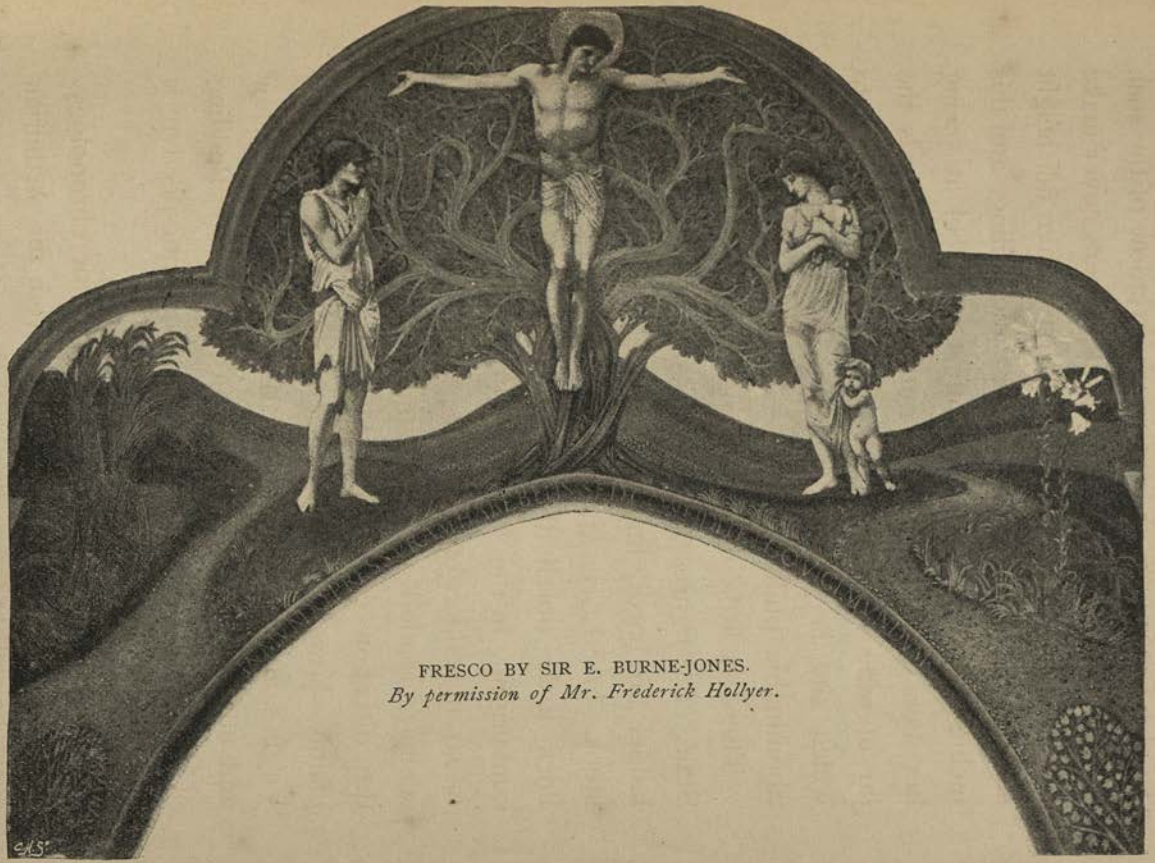
(V) Their brows bent to the ground, their eyes raised to Heaven. See the "Dragon's Rock," "The Tower of Brass," the "Morning of the Resurrection," the "Depths of the Sea," the first figure on the left in the "Golden Stair," the "First Day of Creation," the "Winter," "The Hand Refrains" in Pygmalion.

(VI) There does not seem to be a single figure standing upright. In "King Cophetua" there are two pages standing, but they are behind a balustrade which screens them almost entirely. All the figures in Burne-Jones' master-pieces are sitting or lying or kneeling, so that the particular defects of the artist in drawing are not remarked.

on the face of the figure, on the window of the soul, on the soul itself. Psychological painters never make broad skies. If Circe were to rise to her full height she would hit her head against the ceiling, and this feeling increases the discomfort we feel at seeing her bent double, her arm outstretched towards the jar of wine she is about to offer to the Greeks, into which she is pouring charily some drops from the abominable philtre.

There is little or no perspective. In the "Golden Stair," the figures at the base of this extraordinary ladder are hardly larger than those on the uppermost steps. In "Love amongst the Ruins," the parallel lines of the porch diverge as they recede instead of converging. In the "Annunciation," the angel Gabriel is so much larger than the Virgin that the picture seems intended to be looked at upside down; but the direction of the receding lines of the portico plainly shows that the horizon line passes across the Virgin's eyes, and therefore the foreground is below and not at the top of the picture. In "The Building of the Temple at Jerusalem," the perspective is deliberately sacrificed.

The painter also has a disregard for chronology. If he does not take all his subjects from the Arthurian cycle, he clothes them all in legendary colours, even his "Annunciation," which takes place under Renaissance



FRESCO BY SIR E. BURNE-JONES.
*By permission of Mr. Frederick Hollyer.*

bas-reliefs, even his "Adoration of the Magi," where a brigand offers gifts to the future victim of Pontius Pilate. His Greeks talk like Chaucer, and his Briton heroes wander through the scenery of the Decameron. They might well be called Sir Troilus and Lady Cressida. Like the sweet socialistic dreams of his friend William Morris, Burne-Jones' works might be entitled, "Pictures of Nowhere."

His colouring too is chimerical inasmuch as he gives small heed to the values of tone. His is the brilliancy of polished glass, the dull glow of shining bronze, the dead sheen of dark mirrors. But this colour becomes sometimes harmonious, although it is so bright. Nothing is softer than the reflection of a rose in a cuirass, of a bare foot on a marble pavement, of drapery on a background of metal. Nothing is more restful than this look of old stained glass. Unfortunately the workmanship is as laboured as the effect is harmonious. The continuous repeated effort is evident in it, a persistent unceasing exertion. There is no relaxation, no freedom of the brush. Apparently it is the alchemy of M. Hebert and sometimes of Millet. No one could wish to copy one of Burne-Jones' pictures. When all this work does not succeed, you only feel the trouble it has cost; and the workmanship wearies the eye of the spectator, as much as it did the hand of the worker.

The stones look as if they were woven like tapestries, and the draperies as if they were built up like walls. The stuffs are like lead, the feet like cotton, the flowers like iron. The knights in their cuirasses look as if they were clothed in artichokes. Many of Burne-Jones' pictures are in water-colour; but to imagine one of his water-colours the term must be divested of all idea of freshness, liquidness, brightness, fancy, of happy, skilful touches, of fortunate results, of all memories of Turner or even of Miss Clara Montalba. The most complicated plastering of fine dry touches on other dry touches; the exclusive seeking after body at the expense of variety, and of rich colour in place of delicate tones, give to his figures the look of painted and varnished statuary. They are not bathed in air, their outlines do not melt into the surrounding colour; they swim in the vacuum of a pneumatic bell-glass. But when, in spite of all this, the flesh tints are solid, and the hands are well modelled, all else is forgotten; the effort of the workmanship, the conventionality of the idea, the hardness of the touch, the heaviness of this flaky pastry crust. The portrait of Miss Amy Gaskell exhibited at the New Gallery in 1894, drew exclamations of admiration from the most obstinate opponents. False in tone and in effect, heavy in workmanship, but wonderfully modelled under its dull whiteness, it was like a fine portrait by M.

Hebert; the manner was condemned, but the result was applauded.

Burne-Jones' figures, if they are inaccurately drawn and heavily coloured, are on the other hand admirably arranged. For composition, if that be restricted to the adjustment of lines, and to the order and motion of the outlines, there is perhaps no European master of the present day who can equal him. Not that he knows how to arrange large groups of figures; in the "Feast of Peleus" and the "Mirror of Venus" the interest is too much divided to be telling. Even the "Golden Stair" contains many figures which are but repetitions, and which could be withdrawn without any loss to the whole. But the isolated figures, such as Hope, which he represents standing in prison, one hand holding a flowering branch, the other lost in a cloud, thus projecting a part of herself beyond the iron bars of life; or his Faith under a dome, holding the symbolic lamp; or his "Delphic Sibyl," or his "Days of Creation," are marvels of composition.

Each day of Creation is represented by a standing angel, with a mass of folded draperies and feathered wings, holding a crystal globe to his breast. In this globe is reflected the work of God during the period that he represents. Thus in the third day appears the outlines of delicate foliage in accordance with the words:

"And God said: let the earth bring forth grass, and the tree yielding fruit after his kind."

In the globe of the fifth day appears a flight of great sea-birds, and the angel's feet stand on a shell-strewn shore. As the week of creation proceeds, the angels of the preceding days are grouped behind the one who holds the globe. It is impossible to conceive a more graceful and less pedantic symbolism.

Let us turn now to a duet, "Merlin and Vivien," for example, an old work and very inferior to the "Days of Creation," but one of deep feeling. The subject is well known. To distract his thoughts from war and politics, Merlin would sometimes wander through the forest of Broceliande in the guise of a young scholar. There he met with a maiden called Vivien, born of a fairy, who endowed her in her cradle with three gifts,—to be beloved by the wisest man in the world, to compel this man to do all her behests, and to learn from him all that she wished to know. Old Merlin could not avoid his fate. As he was the wisest man on earth, he must love Vivien; and as she was made miserable by his constant journeys to the court of King Arthur, and as she asked him each time to teach her his magic art whereby she could send anyone to sleep and then imprison him, without stones, or wood, or iron, simply by enchantment. He was

obliged to give way to her in that as in all else. He guessed what she was aiming at; he had said, the she-wolf must bind the wild lion so straightly that he cannot stir. But what recks it ever to foresee danger when in love? One day when they were seated under a hawthorn bush in flower, Vivien stroking the fair locks of the wizard lulled him to sleep; then rising, she twined her scarf nine times round the bush, weaving nine spells that Merlin had taught her. When the wizard opened his eyes all had vanished. He found himself in an enchanted castle, a prisoner for ever, and henceforth powerless to aid Arthur; as Tennyson puts it in one of his monosyllabic lines:

"And lost to life, and use, and name, and fame."

Burne-Jones has chosen the moment when Vivien has just stolen from the wizard the book of magic, wherein subtle spells are written in dead language and in characters "no larger than the limbs of fleas." She has risen up, thin, tall, and sinuous, holding the "book of grammarie" with the tips of her pointed fingers; she is turning her bird-like head, full of treachery and intelligence, towards the worthy philosopher, who lies amongst the hawthorn, smiling at her beauty, yet uneasy at her treachery.

Let us take a more complicated scene, although

it contains only three figures, the "Chant d'Amour," which is perhaps Burne-Jones' master-piece, from the point of view of the composition. We see almost in full face, a girl kneeling on a cushion in the centre of a flowery lawn. She is playing on one of those little organs which are played by angels in the pictures of the Primitives, amidst clouds and trumpets, wings and haloes; nearer to us with his back presented to the spectator, but with his head turned in profile to the centre of the composition, a knight in armour, seated on the ground with his legs drawn under him, is listening. On the other side, a young shepherd, who is Love, half nude, crowned with leaves, his eyelids cast down, kneeling on one knee, is gently blowing the bellows of the organ. In the foreground are flowers; in the background a group of houses or a castle court, and the frame which cuts off the sky; thought is not lost in the heavenly blue; Heaven is here in the girl's eyes. No story, nothing to be guessed, but everything to be felt. The story here is the life of two hearts, and a little air stirred by the waves of sound. The interest, according to Ruskin's precept, lies in the life of these beings, and not in what is going to happen to them. There is no movement except in the gesture of Love the blower, a gentle motion, continuous and easy as in a dream. It is the form of

the human body that is of interest here, not its contortion. The drawing of the knight and of the lady is wonderfully pure. The attitudes of the three figures, which are sufficiently different to complete each other, and sufficiently similar to be in unison, tend to that classical and Latin synthesis which may be despised in theory, but to which all fine works are found to revert when they are examined. The pyramid is replaced on its base. From whatever side it is regarded the lines attract the eye to the centre, and raise it to the face of the immortal musician, to her parted lips, to the inaudible melody which fills the air like the invisible bell in Millet's *Angelus*, to the harmony which is felt in all the forms and details of this vision, to the Song of Love.

When all detailed criticism has been exhausted it is said of Burne-Jones (and this I think one of his great failings) that he takes no interest in the manners and figures and thoughts of our own time. It is perfectly true that he does not paint dresses from Worth, or furniture from the Stores. He should be congratulated thereupon. But it is an immense error, made by realists in search of modern superficiality, to think that his works suggest fewer contemporary pictures, fewer existing interests, because they are farther apart from our daily life than the illustrations

of the Graphic, and the Illustrated News. This is proved by the permanent impression they leave on anyone who has seen them. For myself, I never looked at some of his works without a revival of the anxieties and realities of the passing hour. I can never confine these legendary figures to one period or one nationality, because they are of no period or nationality, nor can I consider them as the illustration of an extraneous idea, which they almost always exceed by transforming it. Last Spring, standing before "Love amongst the Ruins" in the New Gallery, before the two solemn lovers dressed in blue, seated on the ruined columns of an old Renaissance Palace, amidst the wild rose bushes, where a whole world had lived of old, a whole civilisation had shone; both of them thinking sweet thoughts of the vanished order which had given place to the rule of love set up by them, where once law, virtue and religion had reigned supreme. There was no recalling Browning with his trite evocation of the past. Our thoughts were with the present, with the ruins amidst which we live, which are all too real, made for us by those who preceded us.

The analogy between the picture of the present world and this picture of a legend was but too close. All that supported our fathers had crumbled away, for they themselves demolished it vehemently, metho-

dically, obstinately. What have they left us to do? To believe? They have only left us doubts. To hope? They have barred the way to Heaven. To will? They have taught us that we are the prey of circumstances and of hereditary tendencies. To admire, to respect? What is there that has not been laid bare scientifically, and ridiculed professorially? To politics? Only the building of the Revolution was left to us. A great historian appeared, with many in his train, who, with the best intentions, and, alas! perhaps with justice, had overthrown its statues and pulled down its walls. We have legendary figures of heroes; they have been destroyed one after another, regardless of the fact that every time the cold steel of criticism, wielded like the shoe-smith's needle, pierces a legend and slays an image, it slays at the same time many a living hero of flesh and blood, whom this lovely legend, this splendid image, might have inspired. The attack has been aimed even higher, to drag the idea of God from his pedestal. It seems that it is to be replaced by some moral ideas, which are said to have preceded or survived religions; but there is nothing of the sort. Ideas of family, of property, of patriotism itself are deadened one by one, under the subtle pricks of a sophism, which hardly pains; on the contrary it affords amusement by its novel sharpness. Preju-

dices, truths, conventions, respect, social ties, all this social mortar falls to pieces under the nails of the black band, all is disintegrated, worn out. Only some fragments are left hanging in the air, some balconies across the sky-line. The young people who are entering upon life, like those whom Burne-Jones introduces into his picture, find the ground strewn with fragments. What are they to do? To love as his do. In this disorder of the conscience, in this dispersion of all efforts for good, some men, believing that good will come out of evil, are rushing to attack what is left of the social edifice under pretext that there is not enough left of it to give us shelter; others demolishing it because too much of it remains; others, hardened incendiaries, struggling to preserve some of the boards and rafters without strengthening the foundations which they have been undermining all their lives; all of them, from various motives, joining in the work of total ruin, from hope or from despair, from indecision or from indifference, from audacity or from timidity. One flag alone is respected, only one remedy takes effect, one feeling unites all good-wills and seems a safe path for the devoted ones in search of duty; it is pity for human misery, charity, self-surrender, love.

This alone in the eyes of contemporaries, condones

or repairs all errors; this alone elevates passion, even political passion, and purifies it. The fallen woman, if she has loved much, to her shall much be forgiven. The statesman who has committed grievous errors, who has brought the worst misfortunes on his country, if he has truly loved that country is forgiven by a large part, sometimes by the whole, of the nation. Thus it is that love alone amongst the wild roses works on amidst the things that have passed away. He alone is a supreme law, since it has even been said of him that he is allowed all licence save against himself. And this feeling is universal.

At the very moment when Burne-Jones' picture was being admired in London, in Paris crowds were pressing round M. J. Tissot's picture at the Champ de Mars. His Christ in a cope, hustled between two wretches, amidst the ruins of a palace burned by the Commune, comforting them by the sight of the great sacrifice, the eternal pity, was not this, too, "Love amongst the Ruins"? And the admiration this picture excited, was it not due far more to the sentiment it expressed than to its very mediocre æsthetic quality? "Love amongst the Ruins," the work of Burne-Jones is not then a vision of ancient days, a fancy of Gawaine, an idyll of Lancelot, a wager of King Arthur: it is the very figure of

humanitarian and social unreason, of the great unreason of the immediate future, on the gloomy horizon of our struggles our doubts and our despairs. *

* Malcolm Bell, "Burne-Jones: Life and Work."
Julia Cartwright, "Burne-Jones." Art Annual 1894.
L. F. Meade, "The Painter of Eternal Youth."
Cosmo Monkhouse, "E. Burne-Jones."
John Ruskin, "The Art of England: The Mythic Schools."
His "Sibylla Delphica" is at the Manchester Art Gallery. His "Star of Bethlehem" at the Birmingham Gallery. His mosaic of the "Tree of Life" in the apse of the American Church at Rome.

# PART III.

## Characteristics.

## CHARACTERISTICS

We have penetrated into the studios of seven masters of British Art, and have endeavoured to trace life-like portraits of them. Each sitter is arranged in his proper light and painted in his own special colours. But this is only half the picture. We must now combine what we have divided, surround these figures with the same atmosphere, repaint them with the same brush, cease to enquire into their differences, strive rather to discover their points of agreement as a whole, and in what they are unlike their continental brethren; forgetting details and setting aside accidents, like those photographs which only retain the distinctive features of brothers and sisters sufficiently to produce a typical countenance, a family likeness. We have called these men the English painters, let us now define English painting:

# CHAPTER I

## COMPOSITION AND DRAWING

First of all, if we have seen Watts and Leighton, Millais and Herkomer, Burne-Jones, Hunt and Alma-Tadema choosing very different subjects and drawing their inspiration from very different sources, these masters have never been at fault for lack of a subject. Never has one of them wasted his talent on the bare back of a woman, like M. Henner, nor on the face of a scullion in shadow, like Ribot. It is very seldom that one of them has painted an artistic figure playing so insignificant a part as Ingres' "*Source.*" They do not rave over the pure beauties of modelling, of reflections, of lines. The painting of a "piece" is nothing to them, or to their fellow-countrymen. The mouths must speak, no matter whether they please or not. Herkomer, the painter *par excellence* of them all, could not represent the Chelsea veterans at worship without the introduction of the dramatic episode of the anxious friend who touches his neighbour to assure himself that he is still living. Millais, who avows that he only looks

for the specific qualities of painting, has told more tales in his life than Lamartine or Byron.

To take an artist of the second rank, Mr. Orchardson, who is a clever colourist enough to dispense with all the artifices of the story-teller, racks his brains to propound every year a fresh riddle to us. For example, he shows us an old gentleman at night in a drawing-room—in the black coat indispensable to all good Londoners after eight o'clock—and this old gentleman is meditating deeply by the light of a lamp. This is called "Her Mother's Voice"; and at the opposite end of the canvas, behind a piano, a young man and a girl are discovered, making music together; the young man turning the leaves, and the girl singing. Perhaps it is the intonation of the fresh young voice, the gloom of evening, the thought of an approaching separation, the images borne by the flood of melody down the current of the past to meet the memories that arise, which make the face of this worn-out man of the world so sad. But it may be quite the opposite, and Mr. Orchardson would merely laugh at his puzzling us. For with the English, now-a-days the subject is important not merely for its significance, but for its mystery. It is interesting, not so much for what it tells, as for what it leaves to be divined.

In all ages the English have told stories in their

pictures; but Hogarth wrote them legibly on a number of accessories or on labels which he put in the hands of his figures. Our contemporaries express themselves more delicately, or conceal their tales within the closed lips of their figures. A feeling, a drama, a wish, a memory, may be divined, something which is to happen or has happened; and curiosity is the more piqued, and imagination the more called into play, because the drama is never developed, the story never taken up at the point at which it would tell itself. Burne-Jones does not show us an unfortunate princess, bound, ill-treated, imprisoned in the Tower of Brass where she is to spend the rest of her life: no, he shows her to us still at liberty, but anxiously gazing through a doorway at the building of the tower in the distance.

Millais does not give us the assassination of Lorenzo by Isabella's brothers, nor the lovers in each other's arms; but the banquet, where Lorenzo offers half an orange to Isabella and their eyes meet; and all Keats' drama is comprised in the looks of hatred cast on Lorenzo by the two brothers.

Hunt never painted the facile horrors of the Just One crucified, panting under the insults of the multitude, with his flesh torn, his wounds gaping, dropping blood; he has condensed all the drama of the Passion into the gesture of the Mother, when she

sees the shadow of a cross on the wall. This is in painting, the method of the new school of dramatists, who create pieces in which nothing happens, where the whole action consists in the conversation of a blind old man and his daughters sitting round a table; where the drama is foreseen and not seen, the events are predicted rather than felt, where the feelings are the only actors, and the mind of the speaker is the only thing in motion.

In English painting there is always a subject, and this subject is almost invariably treated from its deepest side. How vast and universal it may be we see reflected in the expression of one or two faces; as the great mountain of Fusi-Yama is reflected completely in a small mirror, in a famous drawing of Hokiusai. Madox Brown, when he wished to paint the great emigration of 1852 did not fill a six-foot canvas with a crowd of miserable people, surrounded by piles of trunks and bundles; he put a young couple, with their firstborn, into a boat, looking back with melancholy eyes at the receding shores of their inhospitable country.

The English seldom paint a battle, a festival, an excited, impassioned, unruly crowd; only their second-rate painters attempt such subjects. Whilst in France, if we wish to quote the great works of this century, of David, Géricault, Gros, Delacroix, Decamps; or,

to come nearer to our own day, those of MM. Flameng, Laurens, Cormon, Puvis de Chavannes, groups and gatherings are presented always to our view; if we would recall the best pictures of Rossetti, Watts, Burne-Jones, Millais, of Walker or Orchardson even, monologues, duets, or trios at the most, loom through the haze of memory; as "Beata Beatrix," the "Light of the World," the "Huguenot," the "Chant d'Amour," "Love and Death"; and all these are scenes of the greatest delicacy and refinement. Open the door to let in the crowd, and all these figures would flee in terror. Laugh and shout for joy, they would vanish like a dream. Never in contemporary English art is there to be found a coarse outbreak, not even a burst of joy, never a grotesque or merely a noisy scene. M. Roybet's broad jests have no counterpart across the Channel. There is no amusement to be had out of the pictures of Watts, Burne-Jones, Hunt or Herkomer; Alma-Tadema is the only one amongst his compeers who, coming from a rich pasture land would like to laugh a little, but he dares not do so too loud, and if his figures sometimes dance (in Pyrrhic and Bacchanalian dances) it is only in fulfilment of religious rites. In English pictures there is weeping and praying, loving and dying. And what can be more refined than to weep and to pray, to love and to die.

If we consider the composition a little more closely, we shall see that it does not consist merely in the superficial refinement of title or subject; but still more in the picturesque refinement, which consists of form and execution. Generally the frame cuts the canvas very low down, so that the horizon line is placed very high. The sky is generally left out, so that thought cannot wander into space, and lose itself in enchanting distances, but is fixed on the countenances which are the more closely scanned: as in Rossetti's "Dante's Dream," Hunt's "Valentine and Sylvia," Burne-Jones' "Circe," Millais' "Ophelia," Alma-Tadema's "Lesbia," and the "Plague of Egypt." And there is ample food for thought elsewhere. Accessories abound, filling every corner, heaped up in the foreground; leaves, flowers, tumbled draperies, glossy feathers, precious vases; the small details are painted with a care, and often a sharpness, which gives them great importance. The impression of refinement increases. A carefully warmed chamber filled with knick-knacks is surely more than an empty room. Besides, each accessory has its own significance, they all tell of a sad or a happy past, as in "The North-West Passage" where we can fix our locality exactly; or in the "Shadow of Death." The shell at the feet of an Angel of Creation signifies that the waters under the firmament have been gathered

together, and the shores of the sea have been established. In the air-bubble borne by the Innocents we clearly perceive "Jacob's Dream," and on the soap at the feet of the child with the soap bubbles, we can read the name of a famous soap-maker. Do not pass by Rossetti's "Lucrezia Borgia" without a close examination of the furniture; otherwise you will only see a beautiful woman, superbly dressed, who is washing her hands. But pause for a moment, and what do you see on the table behind this woman? A decanter, wine and goblets. There has been drinking then—but of what? Look in the mirror, and you will see the reflection of two men, who are walking away, the one supporting the other. They are the husbands of Lucrezia Borgia, Alfonso di Bisceglia, dragging himself on his crutches, and the Pope Alexander VI, who is making him walk about the room, so that the poison he has swallowed may sink into his digestive organs and there do its work. Behind them, reflected in the mirror, is a bed, the bed upon which the victim will soon breathe his last. Now that this domiciliary inspection is over, look back at this mysterious woman's figure, so adorably beautiful, and you will understand her expression and why she is washing her hands. So all the details have a voice of their own, the most trivial objects are a part of the whole. You look

and listen, and by degrees you forget yourself in listening to these minute trifles. As an entomologist, hidden in the grass, examines the passing insects, and is lost in contemplation of the worlds that they reveal beneath us; these microscopic details lead to the widest thoughts; the minute leads to the infinite.

From what does this subtle refinement spring? In some degree from circumstances. On the continent, the Church and the State have almost universally encouraged artists by their orders for pictures, of which they have dictated the subjects. In England it is not so. Until these last few years the State has done nothing to encourage the representation of the great scenes of English history, and Protestant Great Britain has but rarely admitted into her churches illustrations of the facts related in the sacred writings. When they are admitted now, it is in the form of mosaics and stained glass, rather than in actual paintings. Hunt has never had an order from a single member of the clergy. Besides all this the English nation, isolated from the rest of the world, inaccessible, almost invulnerable, has never had to inscribe on the walls of its buildings the sad, great history of sieges endured and invasions repulsed. Art has been for a long time supported only by the subsidies of individuals, whose happiness consisted

entirely in home and family life; and its subjects were such as these people saw around them, such as they loved. The contrast between these subjects and our own, forcibly struck the visitors to the great Paris Exhibition in 1855. To pass from the rooms set apart for French and continental works, into the long galleries of the English pictures, was to pass from war and its fury, from great passions and their sufferings, from crimes, martyrdoms and glory, to the peaceful scenes of middle-class domestic life. As Goethe said when he returned from a campaign in France: "Here we are at home, in the midst of perfect tranquillity; the eye wanders in delight from door to door; the happy artist casts tranquil glances on these spots where life moves on so peacefully." It was an introduction into the life of a people without a history, or whose history was made up of a game at blindman's-buff, of a Derby Day, or of a young bride choosing her wedding dress—the life of a happy people.

But these chronicles of middle-class existence, repeated from the Dutch, could not satisfy for ever ardent and searching imaginations. And it is when the people are happy that the individual feels his personal griefs most keenly. Failing dramas from without, on the frontiers, or in the streets, he dramatises trifling incidents within, and failing outside

incidents he betakes himself to noticing, as is done in convents, the smallest attitudes, the slightest gestures, even the condition of the soul. By being forced back upon himself the English artist has ended by discovering something more than tastes quickly satisfied or pleasure easily procured; he has discovered the demesne of the soul, wherein there glow more ecstasies than in any paradise of Rubens, and more storms rage than in a whole attacking army of Salvator Rosa. His subjects have become psychological instead of anecdotal. From the intimacy of home they have penetrated to intimacy of conscience. The chronicles have become philosophical. We no longer are shown the "Marriage à la Mode," the tipsy husband yawning in his arm-chair after a night spent at the gambling-table, and his steward in despair raising his hands to heaven—this was but a tale: we are shown King Cophetua in ecstasy before an unknown beggar maiden, the chimerical bride, the humble, unknown, untried life, wherein he thinks to find his happiness—this is a thought.

At the same time painting passed from the imitation of the Dutch to the imitation of the early Italian masters. The intellectuality of subject, which we noticed as a characteristic of English art before 1850, was changed into the suggestiveness of the subject, which is a characteristic of the English art of to-day.

When the English revisited us in 1878, and specially in 1889, to pass from the French collections to theirs was no longer merely a change from great public events to the quiet of home: as it was well said, to stand amongst their works seemed to be a fitting place to read Dante's *Vita Nuova*, surrounded by serene faces murmuring things that could not be expressed. *

Only, these mute soul dramas, these imperceptible emotions of the heart, all this half-avowed distress of wavering reason, of divided will, or of unconscious feeling, are not to be revealed to the eye by well-marked play of the muscles, or by any definite gestures. The ardour of a soldier defending himself with his sword, the frenzy of a woman valsing, these are feelings which can be easily and naturally expressed by gesture. But the impressions of a maiden at the moment when she feels death is drawing near, and her blessedness is assured; or those of a recluse, condemned to weave tapestry all her days without casting a glance towards a fated castle, have no strong or adequate expression to strike the eye.

In the endeavour to translate them, the artists have been obliged to seek for new words, that is to say

* Vicomte E. M. de Voguë. Remarques sur l'Exposition du Centenaire.

for unusual attitudes; they have been forced to invent positions, to bend their limbs in strange contortions, to intensify the facial expressions. The peculiarity of gesture follows of necessity from the suggestiveness of the idea. The English do not often draw false gestures, but they draw strange gestures. A false gesture is one that the body could not make, or could make only by a painful effort; a strange gesture is one which is never made naturally, but which can be obtained and continued without pain. To join the elbows behind the back is a false gesture; to point to a person on your right side with the forefinger of your right hand, whilst holding the elbow close to the body, is a strange gesture; almost that made by Burne-Jones' "Faith," and "Autumn." It is not ungraceful, because it marks a certain restraint in the movement, a sort of myological reticence, but it is not natural. The natural gesture on the contrary, would be boldly to detach the elbow from the body, as is done in putting the fist on the hip. But it is common, and an English artist does not hesitate between the common and the rare; he prefers the rare. Besides it is vulgar generally to gesticulate, like the orators from the South. The English gesticulate as little in their pictures as in real life; I mean they do not make great, demonstrative, comprehensive gestures. It

has been said of Alma-Tadema that he is the painter of rest; save Watts, that might be said of all his comrades. Their peculiar gesture consists in a marked immobility, or a very slow action. Ruskin's contempt for all violent action, for all rapid motion, for any figure, falling, flying, striking or biting, is shared by the best of his fellow-countrymen.

This it is which makes their attitudes so very original. On the one hand as they wish these attitudes to express the deepest feelings, and as, on the other, they prohibit all violent gesticulation, they result in an overstrained, and yet restrained, play of the hands and faces, exaggerated yet undecided. As the body must not be agitated by grief, as the arms must not be raised to express surprise or indignation, the head is thrown back, or drooped in passionate anxiety, on an unmoved breast; as in Madox Brown's king of France in "Cordelia"; Rossetti's "Beata Beatrix"; Watts' "Hope"; Millais' "Huguenot"; Hunt's "Valentine"; Burne-Jones' "Vivien," "Temperance" and the "Magi"; Strudwick's mortal in the "Ramparts of the House of God." This produces an impression of discomfort which affords much food for reflection. But this impression is always the same, however diverse the state of feeling may be. The time is soon reached when painted forms fail to express the differences of the

two complicated ideas which the artist intends them to convey. Then they repeat the same gesture, the same attitude, whatever may be the sentiment in question. The companion of Mary Magdalen and one of the mariners in the "Ship of Love," may throw back their heads, but they cannot arrive at any perceptible difference in their attitudes; so that sorrow for sin, and joy at departure for the shores of loveland, are presented, by Rossetti, by the same twist of the neck.

Is this peculiarity of gesture intentional? Is it comprehensible? It has lasted for fifty years and we know nothing about it. Some Englishmen possess powers of dissimulation which last all their lives. Take as an example the legendary poet, painter, critic and assassin, Thomas Wainwright; if, by an unlucky chance, he had not been taken up for an offence against morality, this æsthete would probably have gone on poisoning the members of his own, and of his wife's family, without the slightest trace of his crimes appearing in his peaceful life as a refined lover of Art, nor in his poetry, nor in his pictures. For amidst all the varied and serious considerations which he must have given to bring about the deaths of his uncle, his step-mother, and his step-sister, this clever artist preserved the calmness necessary to the study of great works of art and to the pursuit of

the ideal, describing, with the same hand that poured the strychnine into Miss Abercrombie's cup, the pictures of Giulio Romano "wherein the flowers exhale sad perfume from their buds, the nightingale mourns on the craggy lands and the swallow flits in the long-winding vales." Perhaps the overstrained expressions, the twisted necks, the contorted knees, the languid, bent arms of the pre-Raphaelites, are but the features of a mask they have donned, the effects of a wager they have sworn to keep. But this cannot be asserted. They have lived long under this mask; some have died without putting it off, and have carried away with them into motionless night the delight of having baulked the indiscretions of criticism and mystified its high-priests.

In a museum of weapons of war, in an old guard-room, where empty coats of armour stand in a row, may be seen helmets with a broad hollow mouth-piece, turned up at the corners, like a grin on the iron face. These lowered visors seem to stare at you whichever way you turn, and you see them always grinning at you. The pre-Raphaelite mask makes as deep an impression on your mind, and it always retains a sorrowful expression, but you cannot divine whether this is the true feeling of the artist, or if it be only a helmet he has borrowed from the middle ages, wherewith to pass, the visor down,

through these 19th-century crowds, who first were shocked, then puzzled, then enchanted, and soon almost in love with him.

At all events this peculiarity is free from all meanness. The English artists do not attempt to vary their effects by adopting any of the heavy gestures, the dislocated attitudes, that may be found at street corners amongst the lower classes, however significant they may be. They never admit a vulgar attitude, a position that could provoke a gross or sensual, a droll or ironical idea, nothing that corresponds to the sketches of M. Raffaelli. They characterise, they do not caricature. With the exception of Rossetti's "Found!" and Alma-Tadema's "Ave Cæsar" the great English school of painting offers no examples of vulgarity. Even in the languishing figures painted so often by Rossetti, Burne-Jones and Watts: Cain cowering under the wrath of heaven; the Lady with the chain of gold; Guinevere just sinking into a swoon; the servants of the Sleeping Beauty falling into a trance; Hope drawing the last chord of her lyre; even in the most dejected of their figures there is nothing uncomely; the mouth expresses disdain not disgust, the languid gesture is never limp, the careless postures are never feeble. Human nature as a whole still maintains its dignity, though the expression of the head marks crushing

despair; and its self-restraint, though there are clear indications that it is filled with rage; and this combination, hitherto unknown, of violent passion and calm dignity, corresponding so well to the English nature, preserves these figures from all triviality. Even in their representations of the humblest classes of society, all the gestures exhibit that dignified gravity with which Victor Hugo inspired his Sower alone. The passing labourer in F. Walker's "The Old Gate" draws his pipe down from his mouth as Apollo would handle his plectrum, and his little farm-boy strides along with such a noble natural step, that Mr. Philips qualifies it as "aggressively panathenaic." If you look at the same artist's "Ploughing" you seem to have seen the horse that draws the plough somewhere before, betwixt earth and sky. You have seen it on the friezes of the Parthenon, in the brave days of its youth, when, in the words of M. Cherbuliez it seemed to say: One god alone is my master.

Nobility of attitude, with individuality of gesture, and intensity of expression, is then a characteristic of English painting, to which the invariable regularity and beauty of the faces, no matter what may be their social position, largely contributes. Mr. Armitage was blamed by his colleagues in the Academy for introducing a negro into one of his pictures. The

usual type of face of the English artists, whether they are painting ancient or modern days, a peasant or a great lady, is strongly marked by the look of health, of vigour, of symmetry, of a fresh and fair life, of smiling or pouting grace, of repressed delight.

Rossetti's faces are seldom joyful, but always beautiful; they are never distorted by grief. Just as the elves of laughter never draw upwards the corners of the mouth and nose and eyebrows; so the spirits of sadness never drag them down too far. Ruskin's criticism:

"By exaggerating the external marks of passion you do not express the strength of the passion, but the weakness of your hero," is understood and respected. There is a certain resemblance between English faces and the faces of Greek statues in this physical healthfulness, this habitual restraint of facial expression. Stendhal at Rome, and M. Taine * at the Uffizi have remarked upon it, and, in a fashionable assembly in London you are struck by the prominent qualities of Greek sculpture, in the manly vigour and the purity of the lines; or at least the immobility of the features and the sobriety of the expressions. To trace to its origin this Greek-British type, which prevails in English art, from Burne-

* Promenades dans Rome et Voyage en Italie. II. La Peinture Florentine.

Jones' enchantresses to Alma-Tadema's Roman ladies, it must not be forgotten that the unintellectual, stalwart gods, the time-worn muscular Centaurs, the uncultured Canephores with solid shoulders, torn by Lord Elgin from the Parthenon, are installed in the centre of this society, refined by mediævalism and psychology. It is perhaps these splendid fragments which have prevented the P. R. B. from going yet farther in their imitation of the Primitives, and adopting the ethereal reed-like forms of the 14th Century. Perhaps the headless bodies of Phidias have saved English art from the bodiless heads of Angelico.

Let us now see how these masters we have examined in detail combine; that is to say how they group, or divide, the general composition of a picture. Herein another characteristic of the English school is apparent, in the universal attempt to escape from classic arrangement. It is to be noticed, even in their portraits. A French artist generally tries to place his sitter in the centre of his canvas, and so to calculate all the proportions that the figure is easily contained in the frame, without leaving so large a margin that it looks lost in it. An Englishman goes to one extreme or the other. In Alma-Tadema's portrait of Dr. Epps, there is a head and a bust, no arms, nor hips, nor even a back, though the body is in profile. To make up for this, there

are three hands. The third hand no doubt belongs to an invalid whose pulse is being felt by the doctor. Other artists, on the contrary, follow Mr. Whistler; they take too large a canvas, and drive their sitter into a corner in disgrace. But most of them put too large a figure on too small a canvas, a Procrustean canvas which cuts off something in all directions. Thus the frame catches the knight's elbow in Burne-Jones' "Dragon's Rock"; it cuts the fingers of Watts' Miss Dorothy Tennant; the elbow of Burne-Jones' "Flamma Vestalis," and the whole arm, save the hand, of his "Fortune"; it clips the elbow of Hunt's "Sir Richard Owen." Constantly repeated, this produces a strange impression of constraint and uncertainty.

When the scene contains several figures, the desire for originality is enhanced. Far from grouping the figures and concentrating the interest on the principal figure in the centre, the English scatter them at random. We have sufficiently demonstrated this in the pictures of Alma-Tadema. It is also strikingly apparent in Walker's "Bathers," in Holl's "Departure," in Albert Moore's "Follow my Leader," and in all Leighton's horizontal compositions. When Burne-Jones combines many figures, he divides the interest, and his imitators, such as Strudwick and Stanhope and Mrs. Stillman, do the same. Each figure is painted in the most fitting attitude, with

the details which suit it best; but with no regard to the place it will occupy in the composition as a whole. They might have been painted singly, and have met together by chance, each preserving its individuality, like the true, good Englishmen that they are, self-sufficing by virtue of the self-help which rules the nation, and careful to sacrifice nothing of their richness of detail to the whole. Mr. Claude Philipps says of Walker that "One feels that he has not worked as Delacroix declared the painter should work, he has not seen his picture with complete and definite vision before he painted it," * but this is no peculiarity of Walker; it is a characteristic of all his fellow-countrymen. Speaking of our French artists, Mr. Quilter says with admiration mingled with surprise: "They see the subject as a whole, and not in detached bits." † To see in detached bits is exactly the English method, so that although the conception is unified and vigorous, the artistic idea is multiplied, and thereby weakened. In Orchardson's "Mother's Voice," for example, there is but one psychological picture, of the memories awakened in the old man by his daughter's song; but there are two distinct artistic pictures set very far apart; the gentleman in his arm-chair at one end of the

* Frederick Walker. Portfolio 1894.

† Preferences in Art.

canvas; the two young people grouped at the piano at the other end. The centre of the picture, on which the eye naturally falls, is occupied by a cup of tea on the edge of a table. There may be a psychological bond between the two groups, there is no artistic bond. The mind is satisfied, but the eye is not.

Is it not to the satisfaction of the mind, and the suggestion of ideas that the artifices, and even the defects of this style of composition tend? To take an example from a second-rate artist, why has M. Millet placed his widow at the end of a long household table, with a child beside her, and why has he shown us this table-cloth spread out in front of her, bare for three-quarters of its surface: this long oval table surrounded neither by friends nor relations? Evidently, to give us the impression of sad solitude. This trifling example shows how mistaken it may be to attribute to ignorance or want of foresight, our English neighbours' composition. With them there is meaning in everything; every eccentricity has been intentional and fully considered, for if they practice all manners of composition, if sometimes they do not escape from the classical manner itself, intention is never lacking in them. Herkomer even composed his "Last Muster," and his "Charterhouse," in so far that he has very skilfully varied the expressions of his soldiers

and his pensioners, that he has sought out, and perhaps called out, their most suggestive aspect. To notice one point alone; he put himself in front of his figures so that he could see their eyes, and not behind them only to see their backs. This seems to be elementary art; but there are very few scenes in nature where everyone is seen full face, three-quarters, or in profile. The amateurs who take photographs of public gatherings, at festivals, or in churches, know that the best part of their plate is generally filled by one or two backs, the backs of the people who have turned towards the most interesting point in the ceremony—like the photographer himself. To clear the ground where his principal figures are collected, so that they may be seen at full length, and to photograph them so that they appear, not in profile, but three-quarters or full face—this is to compose a picture. Many French artists of the present day do not go as far. They boldly project from the frame, at the base of the canvas, the backs of the spectators in the principal action, who, being in the foreground, occupy an enormous space and take up the best part of the picture. Look at the "Victimes du Devoir" exhibited by M. Detaille in 1894; remark that the four figures in the foreground, of the first importance, only show four backs and four helmets;

not a single face reflecting their thoughts or feelings.

From the artistic point of view this is not always to be regretted, (as is proved by M. Detaille's fine picture), but from the suggestive point of view it kills the work, because it fills it up with objects and forms void of expression; the delicate, mysterious expression, which resides specially in the face and in the eyes. To multiply faces and eyes in a restricted space is to strengthen the sense of expression in the composition. Now, who does this more fully than Burne-Jones and his school. Look at his "Days of Creation"—at all the heads crowded behind the angel with the globe; look at his "Mirror of Venus" and his "Gorgon's Head"; these are only a pretext for doubling by reflection the number of faces. Look at Mr. Strudwick's "Acrasia"; all these strange women's faces peering behind the foliage, cleaving the woodland to gaze with curiosity on the sleeping knight. And the garland of faces, of bodiless faces, ranged round the windows of Paradise in the "Rampart of the House of God." This is the method again of Mr. Spence in his "Rosa Mystica," and of many more. All these faces without any visible support, these mirrors of souls, with no sustaining hands, give the strange impression evoked by the poet: *Les anges le suivaient de leurs millions d'yeux*, and it is clear that many devices have been needful

to obtain this fascinating effect, at the sacrifice of all the laws of composition.

At last you grasp the great feature in an English picture; its suggestiveness to which all else is made subservient. No merriment, but nobility; no agitation, but repose; no grouping, but juxtaposition; no fire, but a set purpose; seldom the realities of life, but always what has been weighed and thought out. The idea that art is a serious matter strikes deep root into us. We may enter an English picture gallery thinking to divert ourselves; we have only escaped from what is futile and contrary in life, its melancholy appeals to us in spite of ourselves. We thought that the painters would show us a decoration; they recite us a drama. Looking at a statue we fancied we should peacefully enjoy its immortal forms; it opens its mouth to utter prophecies. We are like Coleridge's wedding guest; he was hastening to a feast, a feast of the eyes and of the heart, when he met an ancient mariner with glittering glance, who compelled him to sit upon a bench of stone and hearken to the terrible lesson of the Albatross. We too, have heard a doleful story, and we quit the gallery if not diverted, at least enriched in thought; if not more enamoured of outward forms, at least more inclined to look within ourselves; like Coleridge's wedding guest, sadder but wiser.

# CHAPTER II

## COLOUR AND METHOD

We have considered the drawing and composition of an English picture, and have found that they offer three well-defined characteristics: the suggestiveness of idea, the individuality of gesture, (or at least the intensity of expression), and the dignity of attitude; that this art differs from our academic art in the individuality of gesture, and, in its dignity, from our realistic art. We shall now see, from a study of its colouring and method, how it differs from ours in both these points also. The English idea of colour is that it must be bright. This, with the individuality of gesture, is an inheritance from the pre-Raphaelites. Before their days a subdued, or even brown colouring was preferred, the tones dear to the old masters, as the connoisseurs expressed it in the time of Reynolds. Ruskin jeers at "the old umber idolatries of Sir George Beaumont and his colleagues, the 'Where do you put your brown tree?' system;" the code of Cremona-violin-coloured foregrounds, of brown varnish

and asphalthum; and all the old night-owl science which, like Young's pencil of sorrow

'In melancholy dipped, *embrowns* the whole.'

Later on, in 1856, when the crude lights of pre-Raphaelitism had not completely dispersed the classic jaundice, he laments bitterly that "modern colour is on the whole eminently sombre, tending continually to grey or brown, and, by many of our best painters consistently falsified, with a confessed pride in what they call chaste or subdued tints; so that, whereas a mediæval artist paints his sky bright blue, and his foreground bright green, gilds the towers of his castles, and clothes his figures with purple and white, we paint our sky grey, our foreground black, and our foliage brown, and think that enough is sacrificed to the sun in admitting the dangerous brightness of a scarlet cloak or a blue jacket."* The fiery æsthete returns again and again to his charge against brown colouring; "this characteristic of all false schools of colour."

Over and over again he adjures the English painters to advance boldly towards fresh, clear, bright tones, and, as he well knows that he will not be supported by the British public if he merely says bright colour is true or beautiful, he pronounces that

* Modern Painters, Vol. III. The Rocks, and Of Modern Landscape.

it is a divine institution, prescribed in the sacred writings.

"God himself has employed colour in His creation as the unvarying accompaniment of all that is purest, most innocent and most precious; while for things precious only in material uses, or dangerous, common colours are reserved. Consider for a little while what sort of a world it would be if all the flowers were grey, all the leaves black, and the sky *brown*. Then observe how constantly innocent things are bright in colour; look at a dove's neck and compare it with the grey back of a viper; I have often heard talk of brilliantly coloured serpents, and I suppose there are such as there are gay poisons, like the foxglove and the Kalmia types of deceit, but all the venomous serpents that I have really *seen* are grey, brick red or brown, variously mottled; and the most awful serpent I have seen, the Egyptian asp, is precisely of the colour of gravel, or only a little greyer. So again, the crocodile and alligator are grey, but the innocent lizard green and beautiful. I do not mean that the rule is invariable, otherwise it would be more convincing than the lessons of the natural universe are ever intended to be, there are beautiful colours on the leopard or the tiger, and in the berries of the nightshade—but take a wider view of nature, and compare generally rainbows, sunrises,

roses, violets, butterflies, birds, goldfish, rubies, opals and corals, with alligators, hippopotami, lions, wolves, bears, swine, sharks, slugs, bones, fungi, fogs and corrupting, stinging, destroying things in general; and you will feel then how the question stands between the colourists and chiaroscurists—which of them have nature and life on their side, and which have sin and death." *

The re-action against subdued colour brought about by Ruskin and his friends has far exceeded the happy medium attained by the great colourists. Formerly the subdued was too much insisted on, now the bright is carried to excess; Mr. Hamerton recognises that pre-Raphaelite "sensitiveness to strong colour, insensitiveness to faint modulations of sober tint." † The same thing may be said of all the masters, who have come after them, whether they be neo-pre-Raphaelites like Burne-Jones, Strudwick, Richmond, Rooke, or artists independent of the movement, like Walker, and even Herkomer in some of his pictures. Mr. North remarks, with justice, that Walker's pictures are so brilliant, even in the shadows, that they might be said to emit at twilight the heat of a long summer's day; and Mr. Quilter, the better to fix the character of Walker's and

* Modern Painters, Vol. IV. Turnerian Light.
† Thoughts about Art.

Pinwell's works, notices that they are founded on colour instead of on value, the reverse of the French influence." *

This fixes the line of their horizon. What the English call colouring is really a disregard of the law of values of the harmony of tones, and of everything which, by establishing gradations between two tints, prepares the eye to pass from the one to the other without a shock. In their criticisms there is no question of refinement or harmony, or of anything but force. What a success Doré's Gallery had in London. The painting might be hard, but it was forcible, and if it were false it was brilliant. Ruskin admits that truth to nature is sacrificed to brilliancy of colour. The present masters sacrifice everything to it, and do not get much in exchange. The colours of Madox Brown and Hunt draw forth exclamations from us; as do some of Millais' pictures, and all Watts' works except his "Psyche." With very few exceptions Burne-Jones' colours have a false brilliancy, which is called richness in his own land, but on the French side of the Channel it is looked upon as mere tinsel. In the lesser masters the violence of their colouring becomes insupportable.

As Napoleon said, the English never know when they are beaten. Yet some of them have a dim

* Preferences in Art.

intuition that this is not the end-all in colour, and Mr. Poynter, after having acknowledged the superiority of the French school on this point, warns his pupils to beware of this spurious brilliancy which is sought for, at the expense of truth, by beginners, and even, he adds, by experienced painters. Elsewhere, in his lectures, he speaks of the crudities and absurdities of modern English Art. * But this is only one voice crying from the multitude. All the other and the greatest artists hail bright colour. If you fail to admire some one of its strangest applications, it is your taste that is absurd or your logic that is faulty.

"The great artists all painted in *bright* colours," Millais explains, "such as it is the fashion now-a-days for men to decry as crude and vulgar, never suspecting that what they applaud in those works is merely the result of what they condemn in their contemporaries. Take a case in point—the 'Bacchus and Ariadne' in the National Gallery, with its splendid red robe and its rich brown grass. You may rest assured that the painter of that bright red robe never painted the grass brown. He saw the colour as it was and painted it as it was—distinctly green; only it has faded with time to its present beautiful mellow colour. Yet many men

* Ten Lectures on Art. E. J. Poynter R. A., p. 147—150.

now-a-days will not have a picture with green in it; there are even buyers who, when giving a commission to an artist, will stipulate that the canvas shall contain none of it. But God Almighty has given us green, and you may depend upon it it's a fine colour." (Thoughts on Art of To-day. Magazine of Art, 1888).

Certainly there is nothing improbable in this hypothesis of the eminent Academician. Only, if it contains a critical observation intended to explain many things relating to the Old Masters, it would be impossible to extract from it any sort of justification of the modern English school. For if Titian made his grass green and the green has faded, we can predict, from all the colours that have lasted, that his green was true and not false. On the contrary if, perchance, the verdure in the "Proscribed Royalist" should turn brown two or three hundred years hence, plenty of false touches will remain on Sir John Millais' canvas to give rise to a supposition that his green was harsh, as it really is. The question lies, not in the depth of the tones, but also and more especially in their degree of accuracy. The English colours shock us, not so much because they are brilliant, as because they are false, and the relation of the tints is untrue. We are willing to believe that Titian's pictures before they left his

easel were high in colour, but their tones were harmonious one with another; I mean that every colour stood in the same relation to those that accompanied it as the corresponding colour does in nature. Titian might make the whole of his picture darker, lighter, redder, yellower than it was in nature; but he at least took care that the intervals between the tones in nature should be exactly observed, and reproduced in the tonality which he had chosen. The scale might be set in another key, but there was no false note; transposition, but not discord.

To take a more modest example, perhaps yet more striking. Mr. Normann's landscapes of the Norwegian fiords do not shock us, violent as they are in colour, because they harmonise in all their details. Nature herself shows us violent tones and amuses herself sometimes with painting in bright colours. In the valley of Dauphiné, where I am writing these lines in the height of autumn, the woods, variegated with a thousand hues, present a close juxtaposition of the crudest and most dissimilar colours, for it is the moment when the trees put off their summer livery, that uniform, green livery which makes them all look alike, and each one stand forth in a brilliant costume of its own, which proclaims its nature from afar. On the black ground of the oaks, which are

not turning yet, the chestnuts spread forth to the sun their large golden leaves, touched, as it were, by a celestial colourist. The beeches are robed in scarlet, the acacias in white, the service-trees in golden orange. On the blue hill-sides, the poplars of paler gold shoot up into the light, like the torches on the altar on a festival morning. Here and there the maples set the wood aflame with their red fire-flakes, amongst the pines that cannot grow old; and the purple of the Virginia creeper glows warmly on the ivy, ever sad and ever green. The hot, dying day lights up and inflames all these contending colours. The branches, cleanly cut upon the setting sun, make black arabesques on this crimson background. Every oak leaf stands out, and its outline in the shape of 3333 is plainly read against the sky. It is a landscape of which Corot would say sorrowfully, "It can all be seen at once. Let us go." And yet, however hard these outlines may be, however harsh these tones, they make up a marvellous whole because they agree one with another, and the sun liquefies them as he touches them with his giant brush and blends as he burnishes them. To grasp this synthesis, to apply this harmony, is to do the work of a colourist. Up to that point is only the work of a collector.

The English collect violent colours and do not

harmonise them. This results in some measure from the education given to their eye by the objects around them and the colour of the atmosphere in which they live. London, buried in fog almost all the year, has little colouring in itself, but such colours as are to be found there stand out all the more vividly on the unbroken grey tones, and make a harsh discord. On the blackness of houses coated with soot, and of prison-like palaces, glare the raw red of the soldiers' uniforms, the flaunting red of the letter-boxes, the vinous red of the shoe-blacks, the sealing-wax red of parasols and omnibus advertisements. The omnibuses streaked with green, canary-yellow, scarlet advertisements, roll through the town like wandering palettes, distracting and exasperating the colour senses. If there is a ray of sunshine, the distances quickly turn blue. A hundred yards off a clump of trees is bluish; at three hundred and fifty yards the shadows of a portico, one of those porticoes built by the Adams, are filled with violet, and a row of houses looks like a fairy palace. From the bridge in St. James' Park, the buildings of Whitehall appear like a dream beyond the waters of the little lake. It might be the castle built in exchange for Rhine gold by the giants Fasolt and Fafner of old for the gods: it is a public office filled with official papers. And yet the foregrounds have almost

the same value as with us. A passing workman, a soldier, stands out sharply in black or red upon this coloured fog. The background being weaker, the foreground seems stronger. There is no relation, no transition between them. The violent shock of these two tonalities confuses the eye, which loses all idea of harmonies.

These painters leave the London fogs and go to Scotland, for example, in search of colour; they are dazzled by it as Mr. W. Black allows when he says: "Certainly the vividness of the colour in the Highlands, especially in changeable weather, the dazzling whiteness of the clouds, the purple glow of islands in shadow, the brilliancy of the scorching sunlight on the silver-grey boulders, the yellow lichen, the crimson heather and the clear tea-brown burn, all this is at once the delight and the bewilderment of the landscape painter; and must arise chiefly from the fact that the atmosphere instead of being loaded with the haze of continuous fair weather is continually washed clear by Atlantic gales. This must account too for the intensity of the blue of the sky, a deep germander sort of blue that has nothing in common with the pale turquoise of countries where better weather prevails." And Mr. W. Armstrong adds: *

* The Life and Works of Sir J. E. Millais.

"Autumn spent in a country like this and spent not in painting solely or mainly, but also in those manly pleasures which compel the most intimate communion with nature, is a fine corrective to months passed in a London studio."

But Mr. Armstrong is mistaken; the corrective is too strong. For those painters who live out the year in a gloomy studio, under a sky streaked with rain, in such an atmosphere that their pictures must be glazed over, there is nothing worse than these sudden excursions into the sunlight. The brilliant colours on which they fall ravenously are too strong nourishment for their imagination.

All the more so if they go to Provence or to Italy. They hesitate distracted before these treasures of light, like thrifty folk who have managed their small means skilfully, and who suddenly inherit a colossal fortune from an uncle in America; they are dazzled, and lose all sense of value. They, who had saved their pence, squander their millions.

If you watch an Englishman painting as you walk along the Corniche road, he is generally using ultramarine, cadmium, emerald green and lake. His picture is streaked with colours ten times more brilliant than those of the Frenchman beside him. He is always the fellow-countryman of Turner, who, dying in a garret at Chelsea, murmured as he turned

his eyes to the setting sun, as his last thought and his only farewell to men and to life: "The sun is God."

But this want of harmony does not arise solely from the æstheticism of Guèbre, from the dazzlement caused by too abrupt a transition from the darkened atmosphere in which they dwell, and the brilliant atmosphere to which they go in search of colour. It arises chiefly from a general disposition of mind which alienates them from all synthesis. Farrar, wishing to find excuse for the raw blue of Hunt's shadows in his "Deserted Flock," tells us how one day, as he was walking with Ruskin at Denmark Hill, the great æsthete took a piece of cardboard, made a hole in it with a pin and asked his companion to look through it, and see what colour the cast shadows of the trees looked to him, under the full blaze of a summer sun. This piece of cardboard is a symbol. The English examine each colour through a small hole, one after the other, without considering the colour beside it nor the effect as a whole. They make a picture by beginning it at one end and finishing it at the other, without knowing, or troubling themselves, if the end which finishes the work will concur in effect with that which began it. They do not admit any air to connect the different planes as a whole; no general tonality to

soften, to enclose, and to bind them together. It is a solar spectrum, not an object lit up by the sun. This analytical painting might take for its motto: More colours than colouring.

Here we touch upon a question of method. No other result could be imagined which the English could reach with the very peculiar notions they have of the best way of applying colour. No doubt the method varies with every painter, but it can be referred to a general type. The ruling idea is horror of a broad, supple, facile method, which covers over the experiments of the first layers of colour, and conceals the working. What is entirely forbidden is the thick, liquid, oily touch trailed over the canvas with the brush, or the palette knife, or the fingers; what they call a smear. Watts says, "There is nothing I dislike so much as the appearance of dexterity, which is the feature of the present French school. Such a display of skilfulness is born of vanity in the artist, and only serves to distract the spectator's attention from the main subject." So far as regards concealing the working. As for the oily touch, his condemnation of it is yet more pronounced. "Till after the time of Van Dyck, though I might almost say Rubens, you never find the smear, that characteristic of so much of the French work. You will never find a trace of it in my pictures, or, if

you do you may be sure it is because my work has been rubbed out with the intention of re-painting." *

This declaration of war to the French method is not peculiar to Watts. He holds it in common with all the English masters, and it is signed by each one of them with his brush. The horror of the smear has led them to an extraordinary method, which has at least this good quality, of belonging to them alone, and is one that nobody will think of taking from them. So, when Mr. Quilter tells us that Hunt's method of working is the absolute negative of all the French theories of painting, we can only rejoice at the fact. Except in some pictures by Leighton, Herkomer, and Alma-Tadema, the English method in general is heavy, trivial, laboured, dry, limited, in thick, close touches, *tight;* the labour is apparent, the constraint is surmised, the pains taken by the painter are felt by the spectator. You might be looking at a tapestry woven with infinite pains in exile; by a philosopher, or a mathematician. As in the "Song of the Shirt,"—

> "It is not linen you're wearing out,
> But human creatures' lives."

The English occasionally recognise this. In a letter written by Rossetti to Bell Scott in 1859, these significant words occur:

* Works of G. F. Watts, R.A. Pall Mall Gazette, Extra No. 22.

"I have painted a half figure in oils, in doing which I have made an effort to avoid, what I know to be a besetting sin of mine, and indeed common to P. R. B. painting; that of stippling on the flesh."

"He is insufficiently alive to the expressive power of brushing," Mr. Armstrong says of Millais. "He seems too often to think that if the effect is true, it does not matter how it is won." Mr. Quilter says of Hunt, "It is careful in the extreme and laboured; to make use of a studio word—*tight*. From the point of brush work it has few merits. It seems to be done painfully, bit by bit."

It does not merely seem to be; it is so. In their admiration for the practice of the early masters the pre-Raphaelites confused the methods of fresco with those of painting in oils, and set themselves to paint their pictures bit by bit, only attacking one part when the other was completely finished, and never deviating from this rule.

Our youthful symbolists, who are never tired of making jokes at the expense of one or two of our masters suspected of painting after this fashion, never imagine that they are quizzing the pure pre-Raphaelite method. On this point an authorised commentator of Ruskin, after a long exposition of the master's theories, goes so far as to say, that "each mass ought therefore to be painted separately and painted

at once without retouching; that is the ideal and perfect manner of execution," and that there may be no misunderstanding, adds: "The perfect method of painting is therefore a sort of mosaic

A mosaic is the word that Mr. Quilter also makes use of to give the best idea of Hunt's painting; and he is right. A canvas on this painter's easel has some portions completely finished, and others entirely blank. The artist completes one figure, and then passes on to the next, which is only outlined in pencil on the white canvas. When there is no more white canvas left the picture is done. How can the colours in one corner correspond with those which are going to be laid on the opposite corner? How can all these figures agree and combine, and be in unison with one another, when they were not born at the same time, did not grow up together, are not contemporaries, but were created bit by bit, the first one dating perhaps three years back, the last one hardly dry. It is evident that this detail of method must react on the general harmony of the colours, and through this harmony on the effect as a whole. For, if all the separate parts of a picture are finished off gradually in successive layers of colour, repainting, if needful, the whole canvas in the same scale of colour and taking care that too bright

* Collingwood. The Art Teaching of J. Ruskin.

a tone on the right does not clash with an indispensable tone on the left; modifying, from the outset, all that, however true or beautiful in itself, must damage any colour that has been used elsewhere, harmony is more easily attained by these means than by carrying out the finish of each figure separately to its utmost limit. It is not surprising therefore, if the English colouring, however true it may be in itself, is not harmonious, and having failed in the drawing of the grand outlines, which are the synthesis of form, the English artists lack air and atmosphere, which are the synthesis of colour.

Whence comes this horror of a broad method? From pre-Raphaelitism again, and from its desperate efforts to substitute bright colour for warm colour. In fact, in the re-action of the P. R. B. against brownness it would have been useless to adopt bright colours if they had continued the practice of liquefying them copiously, first with oil and then with medium on the palette. For the more oil there is in a picture the more it blackens. Many amateurs are ignorant of this, and persist in using very liquid colours; but artists know it well, and M. Vibert has truly written that all mediums turn paintings yellow and black. *

It was therefore necessary in the pursuit of bright

* La Science de la Peinture.

and solid colour to proscribe, up to a certain point, all liquid touches. Watts, especially, restricted himself to the employment of very dry colours only, seeking for body at the cost of delicacy; and all his colleagues have, like Herkomer, followed his example in varying degrees. They have certainly urged too far the results of a correct idea, and without soaking themselves in oil, they might have adopted a broader and less laboured manner. But such painstaking does not shock an Englishman. He sees therein rather a proof of good work, of persistence, and an assurance that the artist has deserved his day's wage. Besides, he knows that this method of painting is lasting: that Burne-Jones' "Summer" painted in 1868, is, thanks to its dryness, as bright now as the day it was painted. And this idea of commercial integrity rises superior to all ideas of grace, of charm, of fancy. He says to himself, "The colour is unpleasing but it is solid, honest colour; the artist is conscientious, and upright," If there are defects he does not lament over them, remembering that Ruskin has said, that faults are the signs of effort.

This dry, clean method, narrow but well defined, in which there is nothing messy or confused, allows the most trifling details, the tiniest accessories to be seen, and as all these details are of greatest significance

in an English picture it strengthens, if that be possible, the intellectuality of the subject. What is more intellectual than Albert Durer's engravings and what is more dry. It might even be said that, up to a certain point, a literary subject agrees ill with a broad, facile, and luscious method. If Millais, in his "North-West Passage," had painted the lemon, the glass and the spectacles, as Delacroix has painted his orange and the other objects in the foreground of "Une Noce Juive au Maroc" (A Jewish Wedding in Morocco) at the Louvre, and his flag like one of M. Louis Deschamps' rags, he would have made a much better picture; but no one would have seen the grog, or the spectacles or the flag, nothing indeed of all that tells us we are in the presence of an old sailor, and that the working of his features is caused by the memories of his former career.

If Hunt had treated the ground of the landscape in his "Hireling Shepherd" broadly, like Diaz, we should have seen neither the wolves rushing upon the flock nor the sheep straying across the borders of their pasture to browse on the harmful green corn, nor the bird of prey hovering over them, nor even the species of the butterfly the shepherdess is holding as a fatal omen; we should only have seen a peasant girl, and all the moral significance of the

parable would have been lost. To preserve it, all these details, even those in the background, must be painted with precision and well-defined, that is dryly. Thus, as the idea became more developed, the colour became harder, and the touch more niggling. This is the result of suggestive art. If nothing is to be lost of the intellectual conception of a picture, the details of the drawing must be disproportionally respected. If a happy touch breaks the line and confuses the details, the meaning is destroyed. For the drawing is the intellectual part of a picture as the colour is its most striking feature; ideas are suggested to the brain by the minutiæ of the former, not by the play of the latter. From the moment that a picture is ideographic it is condemned to be no longer lightly æsthetic. Picture puzzles are not art.

Now we can form some clear idea of the English colour and method; brilliant to rawness, defined to dryness. But, if a further example were needed to define the opinion of the English on this point, as people are said to be judged better by their antipathies than by their preferences, we will take that example from the artist who best controverts the theories and condenses most completely the antipathies on the other side of the Channel—Mr. Whistler. No work shocks the English more than that of the

American painter. They demand a subject, legendary or historical; he gives them merely a Harmony; they look for studied gestures; he does not give them even an outline; for bright colours, and his figures float in shadows; for a well-formed body, and they flee impalpable, sometimes only showing the tip of a heel; for superfluous details, and he does not even supply the necessary connections. So Mr. Whistler has furnished English artists with an example as a standard of æstheticism, what may be called their code of colour. When I speak of a code it is no mere metaphor, for it was in the English law-courts that the æstheticism of Whistler was judged in the famous law-suit against Ruskin, which, the Attorney General said, was the greatest fun the English public had ever had. The circumstances may be recalled here.

In 1878 Mr. Whistler gradually introduced into the studios the idea that a picture should be a mere collection of harmonising colours, the theory of art for art alone, and introduced the French method. Ruskin perceived the peril. With the same pen wherewith thirty years before he had defended the pre-Raphaelites, as the inaugurators of a national art, he attacked this foreign method, which eschewed all detail, which revived the greys and browns of former days, which was the direct negation of

all his theories, an insult to his whole life. Mr. Whistler was exhibiting at the Grosvenor Gallery a "Nocturne in Black and Gold," which he boldly described as "fire-works." There was nothing to be seen in it. Ruskin could not contain his indignation.

"For Mr. Whistler's own sake no less than for the protection of the purchaser, Sir Coutts Lindsay ought not to have admitted works into the gallery in which the ill-educated conceit of the artist so nearly approached the aspect of wilful imposture. I have seen and heard much of Cockney impudence before now; but never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face."

For this insult and for others, Mr. Whistler dragged the author of "Modern Painters" and "Sesame and Lilies" before the Courts of Law. The question brought before Baron Huddleston on November 25th and 26th at Westminster was to decide whether Mr. Whistler's painting was a bad joke or not. The jury were terribly puzzled by it. Never probably since Veronese was cited before the Inquisition had such a case been entered in the annals of Justice. Mr. Whistler's pictures were produced in court, and dialogues took place like the following:

Baron Huddleston.—Is it this part of the picture

at the top which represents old Battersea Bridge? (Laughter)?

The Witness.—Your Lordship is too near the picture to see the effect I intended to produce at a distance. The spectator is supposed to be looking up the river and turning towards London.

The principal English artists were summoned to give evidence, and questioned after this fashion.

Mr. Bowen.—Do you consider that detail and composition are essentials in a work of art?

Mr. Burne-Jones.—Very certainly.

Mr. Bowen.—Now what details and what composition do you find in this Nocturne?

Mr. Burne-Jones.—Absolutely none.

Mr. Bowen.—Do you think that 200 guineas would be a great price for this picture?

Mr. Burne-Jones.—Yes, considering how much conscientious work is often done for much less.

Mr. Frith was also summoned and said: "I do not consider the 'Nocturne in Black and Gold' as a serious work of art."

The "Times" critic made the same declaration.

Mr. Whistler collected afterwards all this evidence in a pamphlet which he called "The Voice of a People." It is a very true title. All England followed Ruskin in his contest with the American painter and against the French method. When the jury after

two days of extraordinary argumentations, condemned Mr. Whistler's painting, but, to protect him from defamation, brought in a verdict against Ruskin for one farthing damages, a public subscription was immediately opened to cover this sum—and also the £400 which the suit had cost him; for the danger had been a public one, and the condemnation almost unanimous. Mr. Whistler's success might have caused a pernicious relapse to the brown and the smear. "Some of the figures the artist exhibits as Harmonies are mere strokes of the brush," said the "Scotsman." "He paints with soot and mud colour; far from contenting himself with primary colours he hardly perceives the charm of secondary or tertiary ones," said "Merrie England." "Some smears of colour, such as a painter might make in wiping his brushes on his canvas," said "Knowledge."

Might it not be Ruskin we hear attacking the painters of the beginning of this century and pointing out to them the need for pre-Raphaelite minuteness. It is well, therefore, to hold up the example of Mr. Whistler, and it is useful to recall his famous law-suit, because it lights up, condenses, and defines the British taste. Although he triumphed, and secured a farthing damages, Mr. Whistler was condemned by the voice of the people, on the day that æsthe-

tic England declared she would suffer no foreign influence in her method of painting, that she had fought her way to pure colour, and the dry method of applying it, that she was proud of these two characteristics and meant to keep them. *

* Whistler: "The Voice of a People" and "The Gentle Art of Making Enemies."

Collingwood, "Life and Work of J. Ruskin." Vol. II.

## CHAPTER III

PURPOSES—CONCLUSION

To what does so strange an art tend? Evidently to something more than the delight of the eyes. "The art whose end is pleasure only," says Ruskin, (Two Paths) is pre-eminently the gift of cruel and savage nations (Moorish, Arabian and Indian ornament) cruel in temper, savage in habits and conceptions; but that art which is especially dedicated to natural facts (as the Primitives) always indicates a peculiar gentleness and tenderness of mind."

"The greatest art secures Beauty, but does not make it the chief end," adds Collingwood. English painting has an aim then which enlightens its peculiarities, an idea behind the head or behind the canvas which explains its defects; a programme, not that of displaying fine forms and rich draperies; and the conviction grows as you look at the works of the masters, or read those of the critics, that this aim, outside æstheticism, holds a prominent place, perhaps the foremost place, in their consideration.

In the first place their aim is to appeal to all the

faculties of man: mind, intelligence, memory, conscience, heart; not merely to that faculty of our being which sees, which is moved by seeing and which imagines. "Art," says Mrs. Barrington, "starts the mind, by its suggestiveness to a completer view of human conditions than that which ordinary every-day life affords"; and Ruskin says, "thoroughly perfect art must bring out the whole man." To do this the artist's understanding must also be perfect, and it is so. You will not find amongst the English the great intuitive artist open to feeling for forms and colours and impervious to all else, at least you will find such no longer. Turner and Walker were so. But at the present day all artists of note are like the painter poets, W. Blake, Bell Scott, Rossetti, in the wide extent of their knowledge and their sympathy. William Morris, the tapestry maker and glass stainer, is also a fine poet and the most attractive of socialist writers. Leighton spoke all sorts of languages. Burne-Jones took his degree at Oxford and is learned in legendary lore. Watts is a philosopher; Hunt an expounder of Scripture; Alma-Tadema an archæologist. Poynter gives lectures as Reynolds did. Stephens, and the lamented P. G. Hamerton, were always better writers than painters. Hook interests himself in sociology, and Birket-Foster in ornithology. Millais and Herkomer both discourse

brilliantly on any form of art, and the latter has been a public Professor at Oxford. In conversation with some of these masters, the superiority of their culture over most of our French masters is very striking. All the burning questions of the moment find an echo in their studios. Every breeze that sways the multitude ruffles the minds of these artists. When painting is put aside in Mr. C's studio theological meetings are held there; and when *La Belle Dame sans Merci* is not walking in Mr. H's garden at Hampstead, Mr. Gladstone is holding forth amongst the rhododendrons on Home Rule. Such artists can work upon all our faculties, because all theirs are at work, and can teach us much, because they themselves have learned much.

What they teach us above all is to work. The improvisor who does a horse or a Harmony in a couple of days, like Fromentin or Mr. Whistler, and asks two hundred guineas for it, on the pretence that he has been preparing himself for thirty years to do it, is excessively rare amongst the English. Most of their artists are alike in their scorn of facile success, their steadiness at work, their determination never to be satisfied with it as long as they feel something better than it is in themselves; I should say in their conscience, were it not that this word, the finest that can be applied to any man, has lost its value by

abuse, in the daily attribution of it to artists in whom it is utterly wanting. Madox Brown spent four years over his "The Last of England," which contains only two important figures; and fifteen years painting the frescoes in the Town Hall at Manchester. Mr. Hodgson said of Walker "Never did artist groan as he did in the throes of production. It was painful to see him." * Hunt, as we have seen, has spent a lifetime of continuous labour over a few small canvases—one of our artists would exhibit as many in one year at the *Champ de Mars;* Watts has painted hundreds, but he keeps them in his studio, considering that out of the whole number, only two do not need to be retouched. Burne-Jones gave seven years to the conception and execution of his "Briar-Rose," which is in four panels, each certainly containing several figures. His "Fortune's Wheel" was designed in 1871, but he did not begin to paint it until 1877, and it was not finished until 1883. To read Mr. Hamerton's accounts of his encampment in the Lancashire moors gives some idea of the time and trouble a pre-Raphaelite will spend in studying on the spot a tuft of heather. In his wooden hut, covered with canvas steeped in pitch, Mr. Hamerton had to endure for months cold, damp, and gales of wind, the curiosity of the peasantry who

* An Artist's Holiday.

gathered round in the hope of seeing him do conjuring tricks, the attacks of night poachers and the foolish questions of the neighbouring bumpkins. *

This same craving for exactitude inspired Mr. Boot with the idea of painting his sea and river pictures from a studio boat, fitted up for fresh waters, which he named the *Thetis;* its voyages are famous amongst English artists. Alma-Tadema produces a great amount of work it is true, but he professes, and proves by his own example, that nothing is to be done without effort, and that no indulgence must be allowed by the artist to his own work. If a piece which has cost him a thousand pains seems to him useless or dangerous, he says: "Art lives by sacrifice!" and rubs it out. If the whole work does not satisfy him he destroys it unhesitatingly, with fantastic courage. In 1859 one of his pictures was refused by the jury of an exhibition in Brussels. It represented a fire. He asked his friends to come and see the picture in his studio, to slash it, and pass through it as if it were a door. He set them the example by leaping himself, head foremost, into the flames of his picture. This freak required some courage. It shows the necessity of hard work, the value of perseverance, the power of the will; and this is the first lesson of English painting.

* A Painter's Camp.

It contains many more, useful lessons on the phenomena of nature, the facts of history, and the meaning of life. "All great art is more or less didactic," says Ruskin, and again: "For the people the chief aim of art should be didactic." Here we have the explanation, and, up to a certain point, the excuse for those minute details, for those lavish accessories, detracting from the effect as a whole, which encumber most English pictures. They are meant to teach us. The English painter does not study every detail of his flower or his rock from vain-glory in his knowledge, his skill, his talent; but to save us from mistaking a monocotyledon for a dicotyledon, and a granite soil for a schistose soil. It will be remembered that one of the first P. R. B., Collins, introduced into one of his pictures a water-plantain which gained him the support of all the botanists. M. Chesneau has told the story of a savant, who was much surprised to find in a zoological museum Hunt's "Hireling Shepherd," and much touched to recognise in the foreground the death's-head butterfly admirably represented, and a herb-robert, and other plants, painted with such scientific precision that the picture might have been used as a lesson in natural history. * As Ruskin says, "The question whether we prefer art so finished, to art

* La Peinture Anglaise.

unfinished, is not one of taste at all. It is simply a question whether we like to know much or little; to see accurately or see falsely; and those whose taste in art (if they choose so to call it) leads them to like blindness better than light, and fallacy better than fact, would do well to set themselves to some other pursuit than that of art."

For himself, he does not hesitate to declare that scientific instruction in the laws of the universe or the facts of history should be the painter's first aim. He takes no account of one of Tenier's foregrounds, which teaches us nothing as to the geological constitution of the soil, nor of the plants which grow in it, nor of the architectural style of the ruined buildings strewn about it.

Nor do I myself see wherein the great difference lies between a master and a novice, except in the rendering of the finer truths, of which I am at present speaking. To handle the brush freely, and to paint grass and weeds with accuracy enough to satisfy the eye, are accomplishments which a year or two's practice will give any man; but to trace among the grass and weeds those mysteries of invention and combination by which nature appeals to the intellect, to render the delicate fissure, and descending curve, and undulating shadow of the mouldering soil, with gentle and fine finger, like the touch of the rain itself;

to find, even in all that appears most trifling or contemptible, fresh evidence of the constant working of the Divine power, "for glory and for beauty," and to teach it and proclaim it to the unthinking and unregarding; this as it is the peculiar province and faculty of the master-mind, so it is the peculiar duty which is demanded of it by the Deity. * This last feature discloses to us the ground-work of English thought. If art should be didactic it is not as its final end, but because it should raise us to adore the Creator by teaching us in the infinitely little how admirable his creation is. Ruskin wrote from Chamounix as an old man on September 16th, 1888; "All that is involved in these passionate utterances of my youth was first expanded and then concentrated into the aphorism given twenty years afterwards in my inaugural Oxford lectures. 'All great Art is Praise.'"

Watts, criticising Haydon, declares that "all art which has had a real and lasting success has been the vulgariser of some great principle of mind or of matter of some great truth, of some great paragraph of the book of nature." Hunt defines this aim when he says: "I believe that any enlightened person who enters a museum and there acquaints himself with the testimony borne by the links in the order of

* Modern Painters. Vol. II. Of the Foreground.

creation and their relation to the most ancient and most modern facts, will instinctively feel a growth of firm belief in the existence of the Creator, in his greatness, and in his almighty power to institute some day the reign of Love and of Justice."

Even those who do not assign such a distinctly religious aim to art, grant it a moral one; holding with Blake: "Degrade first the Arts, if you would mankind degrade." * One of their critics tells us there were endless discussions whether Burne-Jones' figures should be proscribed as immoral, because they have a pessimistic expression. From highest to lowest the great English artists admit that the whole nation expects them to preach and to moralise.

If this is a splendid aim, at first it appears somewhat chimerical. The whole nation is not artistic, nor in possession of works of art to enjoy. But they ought to be; and here appears the very original view that the English of the present day take of art, of its production and of its uses. According to them, according to Ruskin, Burne-Jones, W. Morris, W. Crane, Richmond, Holiday, and all the neo-pre-Raphaelites, the whole democracy must share in the inexhaustible and moral pleasures of aestheticism. On their principles, art must be both dignified and popular, it must preach philosophy, and to

* Quoted with approval by W. Hunt in "Talks about Art."

all men. It must raise the man who produces it, that is every one, because it must be produced by everyone, and it must raise all who enjoy it, that is everyone, because all should be summoned to enjoy it.

"I protest that it would be a shame for an honest artist," says William Morris, "to enjoy what he had huddled up to himself of such art, as it would be a shame for a rich man to live and eat dainty food amongst starving soldiers in a beleaguered fort."

But how is an artisan, a carpenter, a mason, a weaver, to procure these artistic joys? First, by doing artistic work, the English reply; and, to do so, it is in no wise necessary that he should become a painter, or join an orchestra. He need only give an artistic form to his trade, to the humble work confided to him. "The development of the lower classes should not be taken up at the wrong end, by giving workmen museums and concerts, but by restoring the arts to their original place, by endeavouring to make dwellings and clothes, utensils, furniture, all the tools of life at once useful and beautiful for all. What is an artist but a workman who has determined that whatever else happens his work shall be excellent? And what is the decoration of a piece of furniture, or any sort of workmanship

but the expression of the man's pleasure in successful labour?" *

Therefore, W. Morris would like all workmen to be taught design, not the art of design properly so called, but the means towards that end; a general capability in dealing with art. If that does not suffice for the production of æsthetic work by them, the artists must apply themselves to it, and not be ashamed to devote their genius to the curve of a chair back, or the decoration of a stove. This collaboration will profit both, for the artist who cannot work with his hands ends by utterly forgetting the material he is supposed to manipulate, and produces a feeble piece of work, whilst the workman with no ideal of art merely produces a machine-made article. This is the tradition of the heroic age of art. Formerly the same man was, by turns, the head to conceive and direct, the arm to work, the skilled hand to chisel, or model, or inlay. In these days, unfortunately, different artists are as much strangers to one another as men of totally different trades.

"By this division of labour," says Ruskin, (Aratra Pentelici, Of the division of Arts) "you ruin all the arts at once. The work of the Academician becomes mean and effeminate, because he is not used to treat colour on a grand scale and in rough mate-

* W. Morris. Hopes and Fears for Art.

rials; and your manufactures become base, because no well-educated person sets hand to them. And therefore it is necessary to understand, not merely as a logical statement but as a practical necessity, that wherever beautiful colour is to be arranged, you need a Master of Painting; and wherever noble form is to be given a Master of Sculpture."

This is what the English do in their Arts and Crafts Society, with its exhibitions, at which the craftsman signs his handiwork as a member of the Royal Academy signs a picture. The most refined artists, the most subtle thinkers, apply their imaginations to designs for carpets or mantel-pieces. Burne-Jones decorates china stoves and pianos, and paints designs for church mosaics. Herkomer draws out in detail the ornamentation for a dinner service; Walter Crane, Richmond, Holiday and twenty more devote the rarest talents to the commonest needs. Look round you when you are in the restaurant at the South Kensington Museum, where amidst the enchanting decoration of the poet William Morris, and surrounded by figures drawn by the great symbolist Burne-Jones, you eat your venison and currant jelly, or your rhubarb tart.

Now that art is thus produced by all, will it continue to be the privilege of some few, like the easel picture? No; it must become com-

mon property. Then it will truly be the best of useful work.

"When we see delicate and harmonious dyes and patterns in the fabrics of the windows of commerce; when we see dainty gowns in the street, expressing the fair forms of their wearers with the grace of flowers; when we see a certain sense of relation and harmony of tint in the most ordinary arrangements of paint and paper in our interiors; when our chairs and couches not unfrequently show lines of good breeding; when we find books on the table which have been considered by their printers and designers as works of art as well as of literature, and thus give a double pleasure, since they satisfy more than one of the senses—well we begin to think that something has happened to us; some new spirit has breathed upon the land, that such refinements should be possible to moderate citizens, remembering that such things, but a few years ago, could not be had for love or money." *

If we would utilise the great conceptions of the creators of palaces, of pictures, of pompous luxuries, let them be made use of at least in palaces that are open to all, in pictures that can be seen by all, in great popular festivals. We have seen that this is the view taken by Watts. It is that of

* W. Crane. The English Revival of the Decorative Art.

Ruskin also, and he believes that the great works of the Middle Ages owed to it their existence and their splendour. He says in *Val d'Arno:*

"The entire vitality of art depends upon its having for object either to state a true thing or to adorn a serviceable one. At the blessed epoch of the 13th century virgin art manifests the doctrine of a religion, which now, for the first time, men had soul enough to understand, and to adorn edifices or dress, with which the completed politeness of daily life might be invested, its convenience completed, and its decorous and honourable pride satisfied, that pride among the men who gave its character to the century was in honourableness of private conduct and useful magnificence of public art. In public art, for manners were simple, and it was upon the public monuments that those artizans—painters, sculptors, jewellers, ironsmiths, embroiderers and carpenters—laboured, who formed with the merchants in each town an important third Estate. At this period the canal named Naviglio Grande, which brings the waters of the Ticino to Milan traversing a distance of thirty miles, was undertaken. At the same time the town of Milan rebuilt its walls, the Genevese built their two splendid docks and the great walls of their quay; and in 1295 finished their noble aqueduct. The necessary consequence

of this enthusiasm in useful building was the formation of a vast body of craftsmen and architects —no distinction existing between artizan except that of higher genius or better conduct,—paid for their daily work what was just, and competing with each other to supply the best article they could for the money." Thus understood art will really make the people moral, because it will no longer be a foreign element in their life, high above it like diplomacy, with no share in its pains or pleasures. It will make them moral, because it will ennoble the common, daily work "which will bring the workman hope and pleasure in place of fear and trouble, and will at last become art made for the people and by the people, a joy to the maker and the user. *

These are truly noble aims; but there is one undoubtedly, which in English minds rises above them, of which they speak less perhaps, but think more. It is not enough for them that art should be suggestive, didactic, moral, popular, it must also be national, it must be English. With some rare exceptions, the British artists as a whole are frankly opposed to all foreign, that is to say, all French influence. This is but too plain in Watts, Hunt, Burne-Jones, and all his followers such as Strudwick,

* W. Morris. Hopes and Fears for Art.

Holiday, Stillman, Rooke, Walter Crane, Spencer, Stanhope, Spence. It is less marked in Alma-Tadema, but we must not forget the originality of his composition, and that his style was partly formed in the school of Baron Wappers. Leighton studied almost everywhere, but less in France than in Italy and Germany; and Herkomer has not studied in France at all. Lastly, Millais who, in comparison with his brother artists, was like a Frenchman, differed so entirely from us in his colouring, that his pictures could be picked out amongst a thousand French ones. Their critics exhort them to remain English before all else. Mr. Phillipps says of Walker, that his art "had the special quality, the value of which cannot well be overrated, that it remained in its innovations national in feeling and character;" and he adds: "however tentative and uncertain the art of the innovator might be in many respects, it was a thing of home growth and national in colour, that made his success." Mrs. Barrington praising Millais tells us—"His feeling is invariably pure, transparent and thoroughly healthy, and these qualities contrast refreshingly with the garish terrors and unpleasant suggestions so salient in art patronised by French taste."

And, that we may know exactly what this French taste is, she warns us elsewhere that "foreign taste

in matters of feeling makes for itself a standard of mediocrity." Ruskin addressing his pupils says: "The Greeks are to be looked at sometimes not continually, and never as a model for imitation. For you are not Greeks; but, for better or worse, English creatures; and cannot do, even if it were a thousand times better worth doing, anything well, except what your English hearts shall prompt, and your English skies teach you." (Queen of the Air.)

At the opposite pole of æstheticism Millais says: "There is amongst us a band of young men who, though English, persist in painting with a broken French accent, all of them much alike, and seemingly content to lose their identity in their imitation of French masters, whom they are constitutionally, absolutely, and, in the nature of things, unable to copy with justice either to themselves or to their models." (Thoughts on our Art of To-day.)

And there is no doubt amongst them that English hearts and English skies are inspired by an art superior to that of all other lands and ages. Ruskin says: "that sketch of four cherubs' heads from an English girl by Sir Joshua Reynolds at Kensington, is an incomparably finer thing than ever the Greeks did." (Queen of the Air.)

And Millais: "Put a first-class Rembrandt, a first-class Reynolds and a first-class work of to-day side

by side: pass judgment upon them, taking into consideration the alterations made by the film of time, and you will find but slight cause for lament over the decadence of art. On the contrary you will be proud of our art of to-day." They found their hopes on very unexpected connections, and in the "Two Paths" there is an outburst of Ruskin's equal to any treatise on æsthetics.

"The dominion of the sea seems to have been associated in past time with dominion in the arts also; Athens had them together; Venice had them together; but so much as our authority over the ocean is wider than theirs over the Ægean or the Adriatic, let us strive to make our art more widely beneficent than theirs, though it cannot be more exalted; so, working out the fulfilment in their warning sense, of those great words of the aged Tintoret:

"*Sempre si fa il Mare Maggiore.*"

Considered thus as a whole, English contemporary art sprang from a great effort with grand and immense persistence, towards what was noble, philosophical and national. It did not spring spontaneously as with us, from the delight of admiring, of seeing, of forgetting in the artistic splendour of nature and its creatures the indifference of that nature, the

meanness of these creatures, even the torments of thought itself. It is a child of Duty, not a child of Love. "It may be doubted whether the national mind has turned to art from the pure love of it." (Hamerton, Thoughts about Art. 1889.)

It came into the world to ennoble life, to instruct life, to better life. It did not come to live its own free, joyous life, to blossom out with all the verdure and luxuriance of the vineyards of the South, without any moral or philosophical guide. It has aimed at every object except that of being made itself, as we suppose God is made, for nothing but for the mere pleasure of existence. So English art is connected with everything: with science by its details, with psychology by its gestures, with patriotism by its independence. It is only the beautiful with which it is not necessarily connected, and does not endeavour to connect itself. It strikes its roots very deep into the ground which gave it birth. It is the outcome of national life and national thought, at least of what is most serious and most contemplative in them; it draws its inspiration from the ideas, the feelings, and the prejudices of the most intellectual class in the nation. The English flag would be insulted if a picture in the National Gallery were injured. Its masters are autonomous, are Anglo-Saxon or British, avowedly, undisguisedly, and if it were true that a great nation expresses

itself by producing a great school of art, English art would be the most worthy of admiration of all contemporary art.

Ought this great effort then to be despised or to be imitated? Neither the one nor the other. Not merely is it free from reproach, but thinking on the noble career of men like Watts, Hunt, and Burne-Jones, it must be regretted that breadth of design should not be the natural reward of breadth of ideas, and that harmonious colouring is drawn from other sources than nobleness of life. It is to be regretted that it thus affords a proof that the intellectual and moral culture of man, the most thorough understanding of a subject, unwearied labour, the sentiment of the high mission of art, are not enough to produce a good picture, and that the English should demonstrate it. It is sad to see that the nation which is most independent in its views, most national in its conduct, inimitable in the part it plays in the world, tries in vain to express itself in the fine arts. If it has not yet attained to the delicate eye of the colourist, and the sure hand of the draughtsman, it produces perhaps some interesting, but never any beautiful works. Facing these pictures in which the suggestive side of the subject is seized better and the artistic side worse than anywhere else, it is touching to see how certain theories, upheld by the most eminent

minds and applied by the most conscientious hands, are belied by facts. But this failing may be hailed as the noblest in existence. Such attempts are to be looked upon as checks which do more honour to humanity than many victories, and we may dream perhaps, that in the immaterial order of the world, in which nothing is lost, they may lay the foundations in the future to claims of success for the nation which saw their birth.

As for imitating them, that would be worse than to disavow them. It is not that the English do not possess some of the qualities our artists lack most; the deep study of an idea, the serious conception of a subject, the persevering search for a novel gesture; and we might draw from their example a lesson and a support, if, what is so well done in agriculture could be applied to æstheticism, namely, the exact restitution to the soil of the element of life which it lacks. But, in the first place, the coarse imitation which consists in copying the forms an artist gives his figures, the turn of his heads, the balance of his gestures, the tricks of his composition is always an error—be the model Raphael or Da Vinci. The only intellectual imitation consists in imbibing the ruling idea of any art, not its results; in observing its rules, not its examples, in drawing from its springs, not from its fountains. The pre-Raphaelite idea is that

every man must be himself, by copying any pre-Raphaelite forms whatsoever he becomes some one else. The reasoning: Burne-Jones is original; I am like Burne-Jones therefore I am original; may have some value as a syllogism, but it is none the less absurd. Ruskin wrote:

"The only doctrine or system peculiar to me is the abhorrence of all that is doctrinal instead of demonstrable, and of all that is systematic instead of useful. So that no true disciple of mine will ever be a 'Ruskinian!' He will follow, not me, but the instincts of his own soul, and the guidance of its Creator." (St. Mark's Rest. The Place of Dragons. Preface.) And all pre-Raphaelites think consequently to imitate them is not to understand them; to borrow their formulæ is to violate their watchword, to follow them is to desert them.

But another form of imitation is possible. It consists in drawing inspiration from the ideas which make the originality of Watts and Burne-Jones, in returning to the source whence they drew it, and there is danger in this also. For the skill or the awkwardness, the tenderness or the strength, the pungency and the attraction of these masters, must not lead us to forget that this source is an artificial one, and that artifice is not art. The rather paradoxical pleasure we take in their deviations from

nature, their refinements of grace, their exaggerations of feeling, their neologisms of style, their subtle grimaces, their mysterious gesticulations; all these designs for acting on the brain rather than on the eye, ought not to entice us away from perfect light and fresh beauty. For this pleasure is at root intellectual rather than æsthetic; such as we take in Browning and Swinburne, rather than in Van Dyck or Velasquez. It flatters our vanity as thinkers, rather than excites our affections as artists. It is mingled with selfish revulsions, with psychological curiosity, with intellectual fatuity. It may be tasted, like a nameless, ageless liqueur, the produce of various vintages, which tickles and puzzles the palate. But it must not be made a daily drink, nor must the recipe be handed on and the making of it be recommended. For if the bottle matters little, provided it contains intoxicating drink, it matters much that all the bottles should not be mixed, because this would produce drunkenness, and the taste would be for ever blunted. The intellectual, psychological, intentional artist takes infinite pains for ten years to produce in a great picture the sentiments that his comrade, a poet or a novelist, can produce in ten lines, more deeply and more vividly, and he forgets meanwhile to produce sensations which the writer could never give us. When

by chance, Benozzo Gozzoli would expound theologically the "Triumph of St. Thomas Aquinas" over the heretics of his day, or when Perugino attempts to illustrate the ideas of Isabella of Mantua on the combat of Love and Chastity, (two pictures in the gallery of the Primitives in the Louvre) they give us very obscure theology, and a very complicated poem, but they do not give us such artistic marvels as are in the Uffizi or the Palazza Riccardi. To induce plastic art to express the human soul, is simply to suppress it, by driving it into another form, which is not greatly enriched by it. For as soon as a picture is to be made suggestive, the composition is overcrowded, the limbs are contorted the details are multiplied; that we may be inculcated with the idea of the artist, or driven into the field of hypothesis. Forms are no longer chosen for their beauty, nor even for their truth, but for their meaning or their mystery; and a kind of picture puzzle is the result.

The anecdotic puzzle of Hogarth on the one hand, the psychological puzzle of Burne-Jones on the other, all English painting oscillates between these two extremes, which meet, however, when it is considered how far apart they are from the normal point of view in which an artistic subject ought to be treated. And the delight that an æsthete takes

in divining the meaning of such a puzzle by Burne-Jones, greatly resembles the pleasure a clerk feels in guessing the secret of those little symbolical pictures on the last pages of illustrated papers. It is assuredly a legitimate pleasure, but it is not æsthetic, and cannot serve as a standard to measure works of art. Of all the mistakes which menace contemporary art, all the paradoxes of the impressionists, the crudities of the realists, the artificialities of Academicians, all the insipidity and coarseness, the ignorance and the presumption, there is none worse than art with a purpose, because there is none that crushes art more surely. By following other paths you may be lost in the demesne of æstheticism; following this one you leave it entirely. May we never desert the fine French qualities of logic, arrangement, harmony, simplicity and proportion; which were Italian, Spanish, even Flemish, in the days when Italy, Spain, and Flanders were lands sown in turn by the unknown god who raises artists, or served as a refuge to that vagabond called genius. But if we must some day make a sacrifice of them, let it be at least for some great, fixed artistic purpose, whereby the æsthetic sentiment may triumph and the delight of the eyes be assured; wherein we do not find a philosophical problem which is a torment, nor a literary problem which is a vanity,

but "a thing of beauty", one of those of which Keats has said in his famous line, "it is a joy for ever." Let us beware, above all, of theories which pretend to ennoble the mission of art, by making it the mere interpreter of ideas and feelings, of affirmations or doubts, and which give the artist another function than the expression of the Beautiful, the Beautiful alone free from figures of speech, from purpose, from preaching; as if there were anything in the world that could deserve to have the Beautiful for its servant, its interpreter or its herald. Let us beware of the error of believing that art can be widened by wandering, deepened by the overthrow of its foundations, ennobled by servitude.

Passing through the Umbrian school in the National Gallery, you come upon a small picture done by Raphael in his seventeenth year: "The Knight's Dream". A young knight, clad in armour, is lying under a small, shadeless laurel; on his right and left stand two women in diverse apparel. The one holds out to him a serious book and a naked sword; the other a sprig of flowering myrtle. The one is Duty, the other Pleasure. The handsome youth has halted on the threshold of manhood, and has fallen asleep; he is sleeping gracefully and happily on the ancient shield which whispers war-songs in his ear.

He lets the two women stretch their arms and their offerings out to him, unwearingly, as if they were mere branches of trees tipped with fine, ripe, fruit. The two figures are so alluring that the astute youth would be willing perhaps to keep the one without losing the other, to follow both at once; and in this state of indecision, too lazy to make up his mind, he continues his slumber, fancying that the goddesses will not leave him as long as he remains asleep. He has been sleeping for four hundred years, enticed and undecided all that time, and no doubt Raphael's knight will never awaken. Yet, in the background, shine lovely blue horizons, where we long to wander with our joys and sorrows, far from time and space, breathing that eternal atmosphere which, in works of art, envelopes the figures created by the artist who lived but a day.

Every young artist, unsettled in his mind, enquiring after new paths, who goes to England and falls a-thinking before the "Briar Rose" or "Love and Death", is like this sleeping knight; not because he is enticed by good and by evil, but because the two forms of art which appeal to him are only dream-goddesses, or sun-myths. On the one hand a Burne-Jones nymph offers him the myrtle twig of legend; on the other a Watts' Virtue holds out to him the naked sword of a moral. If he follows the one or

the other he is surely lost. Let him rather look back to the winding roads, the curving valleys, the blue mountains, the flowing rivers. Let him turn back always to Nature, the only councillor he can heed implicitly, the only enchantress he can follow free from remorse. The English painters are great charmers, let us admire them, but let us not follow them.

# APPENDIX

## OF THE POSITION GIVEN TO MADOX BROWN IN THIS BOOK

THE important part in the pre-Raphaelite movement that I have thought it just to give Madox Brown is not generally assigned to him, and it is contested by Mr. Holman Hunt in a letter he has kindly addressed to me on this subject. This position is, however, clearly marked out for him, first, by the testimony of a great number of his contemporaries, and in the second place more especially by a close examination of the works of the various artists, who have taken part in this movement. This is what Mr. Hunt does not seem sufficiently to consider. Having himself participated in the struggle, he perceives more clearly the details which divide him from his former comrades than the feature which unites them, and this is the sole reason for our disagreement. In denying Madox Brown the leading part in pre-Raphaelitism Mr. Holman Hunt never thinks of exalting his own share in it; he has no need to do so, and his well-known modesty preserves him from any suspicion on that score; but he wishes to assert

what he believes to be the right view of the matter, with his usual conscientiousness.

First of all Mr. Hunt does not consider Madox Brown as really Rossetti's master, or that he was ever invited to enter the Brotherhood. He will find it difficult to prove this opinion. Certainly Rossetti did not receive a very long, or a very systematic education in Brown's studio. I think I have made this clear enough in describing the versatile character of the painter poet, but he was drawn to Brown by so strong a sympathy, and cherished such a grateful remembrance of him, that it is impossible not to look upon this master as his master, and as such he was in fact considered. In the Life of Rossetti by William Sharp we read: "Mr. Brown to whom the young artist (Rossetti) was ever through life *willing to admit his early indebtedness*:" and farther on, referring to his Chaucer: "A work, apart from its other great merits, remarkable for being the painter's first attempt at sunlight, and from witnessing such work as this no doubt in part grew the impulse of protest against artificial method that *afterwards* animated the young painters known as pre-Raphaelites."

In Mr. Knight's book on the same subject we read: "The movement which had been in fact *anticipated* by Madox Brown." And again "He (Madox Brown) did more to *influence* the pre-Raphaelites than any

others." If more direct, immediate testimony is needed, let us take that of F. G. Stephens, who was himself one of the seven first P. R. B.'s: "Nevertheless there can be *no doubt* whatever that to Brown's guidance and example we owe the better part of Rossetti as a painter *per se*" (Portfolio May, 1894). Is more required? Here is the testimony of Rossetti, reported by a friend of Hunt's, Mr. Bell Scott:

"Mr. F. Madox Brown came in, to whom I found Rossetti had been indebted for some lessons generously afforded. *This he acknowledged with much effusion.*"

After these numerous and consistent depositions are we not entitled to say with Mr. Quilter: "I must show clearly, by the consideration of Madox Brown's own painting, and the records of his own words, how irresistible is the evidence that he was *in all but name, the real founder and leader of the P. R. B.* movement, the inspirer as well as the teacher."

Again, on the question of Brown having been invited to join the Brotherhood, Mr. Knight says:

"The only reason for his not becoming a member of the Brotherhood was his disbelief in the advantages of clique."

Mr. Sharp expresses it thus:

"Mr. F. Madox Brown, *it is well known*, refused membership on the ground of scepticism as to the

utility of coteries." Mr. Walter Armstrong writes: "Madox Brown expressly declined membership on general disbelief in its utility." This opinion is so classical that it is found in the National Gallery catalogue (1894). Finally, Mr. F. G. Stephens, who, as a member of the Brotherhood, is a witness of the first importance, says: "Naturally enough, Brown was *solicited* to become a brother; but he, chiefly because of a rude principle which, for a time, was adopted by the other painters, declined to join the Society." (Portfolio, May 1894).

Lastly, on an examination of Madox Brown's works there will be found, should all written documents assert the contrary, the obvious source of the pre-Raphaelite researches, expressions and oddities. Look at his "Cordelia," for example, painted in 1849, and then consider Rossetti's "Mary Magdalene" and "Dante's Dream," Burne-Jones' "Magi," and the Council Chamber in his "Briar Rose," and the affiliation of these pre-Raphaelite types and gesticulations, will soon be apparent, and will demonstrate that the position assigned here to Madox Brown is only that which he deserves.

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